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ABSTRACT

This case study is the result of observations of the Responsive Education Project, undertaken at the University Center for Responsive Education, a resource center used by teachers, parents, and children, and at several New York City elementary schools in which the Project operates its Learning Community Program. This open education project was one of nine at demonstration sites selected by the Documentation and Technical Assistance (DTA) Project as exemplifying strategies toward problem solving in urban schools. The report describes participating schools and the local school district; discusses structures, roles, and relationships within the open education program; details staff development, parental involvement, and the role of the school principal; considers various philosophical concepts and their relationships to project efforts at school improvement; and analyzes the possibilities for implementing component strategies in other schools. (GC)

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LIFE AND WORK IN SEVERAL URBAN COMMUNITIES:

A CASE STUDY OF OPEN EDUCATION

Chitra Karunakaran

December 1978

UD022 765

This paper is part of the Documentation and Technical Assistance Project of the Center for New Schools, 59 East Van Buren Street, Chicago, Illinois. This Project is funded by the School Capacity for Problem Solving Programs of the National Institute of Education, contract #400-75-0018. The views expressed in this paper do not necessarily reflect views of that agency.

The names of people, places, and projects have been pseudonymed in this case study to preserve the anonymity of participants.

PROJECT OVERVIEW

The Documentation and Technical Assistance in Urban Schools Project (DTA) is an effort to learn more about how to make urban public schools work better for urban students. Toward this end, DTA combines educational research and practice within one project. DTA's mandate has three interrelated parts:

> DOCUMENTATION - to study, using primarily ethnographic techniques, the ways in which selected urban schools organize themselves to solve problems. Documentation focuses upon nine sites throughout the country selected and funded by NIE to continue to engage in locally initiated improvement activities.
>
> TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE - to develop in practice specific strategies which are designed to improve urban public schooling. Technical assistance strategies are based in part upon documentation of useful practices in the nine funded sites.
>
> LINKAGE - to increase understanding, through observation of DTA's attempts to link documentation with technical assistance, of the processes through which research can be useful to practice, and practice can influence research.

This case study is a product of the documentation effort. The ideas, commitment, hard work, successes and disappointments of the people directly working within urban schools on a day-to-day basis are in a very real sense the base of DTA. This case study captures part of that experience in one of the sites. It is our hope that this description will be useful to researchers, policy planners and particularly to the people who work directly in schools in their efforts to improve the quality and validity of the educational experiences for urban students.

Thomas A. Wilson
DTA Project Director

PREFACE TO A SERIES OF CASE STUDIES

Produced by the

DOCUMENTATION AND TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE PROJECT (DTA)

In 1974 the Local Capacity for Problem Solving Group of the National Institute of Education held a national competition to identify locally initiated projects which showed promise of fundamentally improving urban schools. They were searching for projects which sought to restructure schools in such ways that the schools could successfully work in solving their problems in an ongoing fashion, rather than for the projects which sought to introduce some one shot, particular innovation. They selected nine projects which included a variety of strategies and approaches such as teacher centers, organizational consultation, and community involvement arrangements. This document is a case study of one of these nine projects.

The purpose of this preface is to briefly outline general contextual and methodological issues relating to the production of this case study. We believe that researchers usually shy away from sharing this information and the information is valuable because it answers many of the readers' questions and helps the readers to interpret and use the case study. The readers can find more details on all these issues in the DTA paper "Explorations of the Concept of Local Capacity for Problem Solving" (S. Wilson, 1977). Similarly, the site researchers address many of these issues in the methodological appendices to their case studies.

Focus of the Case Study - Charge Given to Site Researchers

In each of the nine sites there was a particular strategy that was funded by NIE. That is, certain people had written the proposal and were involved in intervening to help improve the schools in ways that they thought would build a long term capacity for problem solving. The site researchers were primarily responsible for documenting the playing out of that strategy. They were charged with answering these kinds of questions: How did the interveners think schools needed to be restructured? How did these interveners think they could effectively take action to facilitate this restructuring? What did they actually do? What happened as they tried to intervene? Why did it happen? What did the school people with whom they work think about what was happening? What other characteristics of the site influenced the course of events? What was the impact of the intervener's actions? NIE had spent considerable time on selecting these promising strategies, and site researchers were expected to document them thoroughly. There was much to learn from these concrete attempts to improve schools.

We hoped, of course, that in documenting these particular strategies, the site researchers would be able to provide a more general analysis of how and why schools do and don't solve their problems, and even more fundamentally of how urban schools function. To varying degrees this more general analysis is explicitly, or implicitly, present in the case studies. The reader, however, <u>should not</u> expect a study of schools as total settings. Clearly, the prime focus was on documenting the particular NIE funded strategy, and often that task consumed most of the site researcher's energies. In the

middle of the documentation, we began to ask questions about the wisdom of this concentration on the funded strategy and we invite readers to share our questioning as they explore the case studies.

Below we present a time line which will help the reader see how the research fit into the history of the sites, and how much time was spent in the field.

September 1974	Nine sites funded activity begins.
January 1975	DTA contractor selected for project.
April 1975	Site researchers begin studying sites and attempt historical reconstruction of events up to their entry in the field.
July 1976	Site researchers begin to write drafts of case studies documenting period of observation. They continue to document sites at reduced level.
November 1976	Site researchers return to field to observe at full effort.
June 1977	Nine site funding ends.
June 1977	Site researchers begin to write final drafts of case studies incorporating critiques of first drafts and new data gathered from second period of observation.

At full effort, site researchers spent about three days a week in the field. The details of dates and amounts of time spent in the field vary from site to site. Readers are urged to consult the methodological appendices of the case studies for details.

DTA Project Context

Site researchers were not scholars pursuing independent research projects. While they were given considerable latitude to shape their own research activities, they were working on a specific government

contract. The readers may find it helpful in understanding the research to be aware of this DTA project context.

This context may have influenced the research by the demands it made on site researchers' energies and by the implicit values it fostered. We have already mentioned how the contract shaped the focus. In addition to producing case studies, site researchers were needed to support other project activities including comparative cross-site analysis, testing of an experimental computerized data storage and retrieval system for qualitative data, and ongoing assistance to schools.

This last activity needs elaboration. Based on an analysis that many research findings do not really get used to improve schools, the DTA contract called for the innovative combination of research on efforts to improve schools with the simultaneous attempt within the same project to use that information to help other schools. Thus, site researchers were involved in activities such as responding to assistance staff questions, visiting the schools that were being assisted, and participating in seminars designed to see how their research could be useful.

The readers should realize, then, that site researchers were not able to focus their energies exclusively on the production of the case studies. Their data and analysis had to serve many other purposes. Also, the contract did not only influence time expenditure. Many people within the DTA project -- including some site researchers -- were not convinced that traditional case studies were the most powerful format for sharing research so that it helped in the improvement

of schools. The emphasis on using the research thus influenced DTA staff's decisions about what the case studies should look like, and even the value some placed on the case study relative to other activities. We invite the reader to read the other DTA papers, in addition to reading the case studies, and to join us in reflection on what are the most powerful ways to use research.

Research Methodology and Theoretical Orientations

Site researchers were requested to use a grounded research process. That is, they were asked to build their generalizations on analysis that emerged from ongoing data collection and to test critically the relevance of outside theoretical concepts and frameworks against the day-to-day life of the site they were studying. Grounded research was deemed appropriate for two reasons:

1. The concept, local capacity for problem solving, is relatively new in educational change projects. DTA was exploring the meaning and usefulenss of the concept. We felt it would be premature to limit the data collection relevant to this exploration by prespecifying the concepts and research activities.

2. The nine sites project staff, the core staff of the two organizations who received the DTA contract and the site researchers represent a wide diversity of experience, disciplinary backgrounds, and theoretical orientations. A grounded research approach would allow the flexibility necessary for each case study research effort to benefit from the theoretical orientations that would be most appropriate for understanding events at that site.

As a result the case studies vary considerably in the nature of their theoretical emphasis and indeed in the amount of explicit theorizing. Most of the case studies concentrate on description and have first-level interpretations. In this way, they attempt to serve as a resource to readers from various disciplines and theoretical dispositions.

Concretely, site researchers used a variety of techniques to collect data. These techniques included some combination of participant observation, formal interviewing, informal interviewing, document analysis, and quantitative techniques. They observed in a variety of behavior settings. The specific details are described in each case study.

The project described in this case study was undertaken by serious, caring people trying to improve urban schools. We are grateful to the participants for letting us learn from their experiences -- to share vicariously the joy of their accomplishments, and with them to puzzle through their difficulties. We hope the reader finds what s(he) needs in entering these pages.

Stephen Wilson
Head, Documentation Team DTA

CONTENTS

Chapter I: Scope and Extent of the Present Study.....1

Chapter II: The Schools and the Community.....8

Chapter III: The Open Education: Structures, Roles and Relationships.....31

Chapter IV: The Building of a "New" Professionalism among Teachers.....69

Chapter V: Parents and the Open Education Project.....103

Chapter VI: The Open Education Principal as Educational Leader of the School Community.....134

Chapter VII: Philosophical Concepts and their Relationships to Project Efforts at "School Improvement".....159

Chapter VIII: Evidence of Internalization of the Open Education Project in the Schools.....203

Chapter IX: The Open Education Project: Considerations for Implementation in Other Settings.....211

References.....227

Appendices.....230

Appendix A: Methodology.....231

Appendix B: Glossary of Terms.....243

Appendix C: NIE Program Announcement, 1974.....247

Appendix D: Project Documents.....249

Appendix E: Excerpts for Author's Field Notes.....255

FIGURES

I: Example of Statistical Information Collected by the Project for its Own Information About its Project Schools.....14

II: Open Education Project: Descriptive Summary.....43

III: Assister's Relationship with Supervisors and Clients.....44

IV: Educational Classification Scheme.....74

V: A Learning Community Continuum of Teacher Development.....99

VI: Structures Involving Parents for the Development and Maintenance of the Open Education Project.....125

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This study celebrates all the children of all the schools in New York City, and salutes their hopes for a decent and interesting life in schools.

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CHAPTER I: SCOPE AND EXTENT OF THE PRESENT STUDY

ABSTRACT

This first chapter briefly describes the settings which provide the basis for the information and analysis contained in this study. The settings are the University Center for Responsive Education, the Project headquarters and resource facility; School A, an elementary school in which the Project works; and School B, another elementary school in which the Project has an NIE-funded assister. Material is also provided on School C, a Bricktown school, for purposes of comparison and contrast. Observations of a less sustained nature were conducted in some other schools.

Among the major themes explored by the present study are the Project's relationship to Central University, within which the University Center is physically located; the relationship, both formal and informal, existing among teachers, parents, administrators and children--possibly as a result of the Project's facilitation--and the consideration of the Project's possible applicability in other school settings.

Some of the findings indicate that the Responsive Education Project focused an overwhelming share of its efforts on roles, structures, and activities that have a direct and immediate impact on children, and that both the staff and participants of the Project had a set of shared assumptions about teaching and learning, about parent involvement, about staff development, and about children's development, which provided a consistent direction for the Responsive Education Project in the ten years that it has been in operation in the public schools.

SCOPE AND EXTENT OF THE PRESENT STUDY

This study is the result of observations of the Responsive Education Project, undertaken at the University Center for Responsive Education, a resource center used by teachers, parents, and children, and operated by the Project. Further observations were conducted in the schools in which the Project operates its Learning Community Program. Intensive observations were undertaken at School A, the Katherine Mansfield School, and School B, the Abe Branch School--two schools in which the Project works. Observations of a less sustained nature were undertaken in School C and in School D. All the schools are located in the Upper West Side of Hattsville in School District R, the main area of the Project's operations. Using a combination of non-participant and participant observations of scheduled and unscheduled situations, conversations and direct interviews, the observer sought to gain detailed information on the participants' experiences with the Learning Community Program and on the Project staff's activities and perceptions of why they favored and undertook certain strategies and procedures. The present study consists of observations and analyses, which were conducted and formulated over approximately twenty months, from June 1975 to July 1977.

Main Themes of the Present Study

Gradually, as a result of intensive, sustained field observation, certain activities, philosophical concepts, constituents, relationships, and organizational structures became the focus of more

detailed examination and analysis. This focus was achieved by balancing: (a) what the Responsive Education Project staff considered to be important; (b) what participants chose to focus on; and (c) DTA's research thrust, based on its own comparative approach to the data gathered from all nine projects. The major themes, chosen as a basis for analysis, which are represented in the study are the following:

--the relationship of the Responsive Education Project to Central University;

--an examination of the internal organizational structure of the Project as it relates to the development of school problem solving capacity;

--the philosophical concepts governing the Project's work;

--the multiethnic, multiracial, multieconomic context of the Project's activities, both in the schools and at its resource center;

--the relationships, both informal and formal, existing among parents, teachers, school and district level administrators, Project staff, and children, within the context of the Project's efforts to develop school problem solving capacity;

--the internalization of the Responsive Education Project, i.e., the Assister role, the University Center, the Learning Community Program within the framework of the New York City educational system, and its influence upon programs in other parts of the country;

--a consideration of the Project's impact upon the schools in which it works and upon the users--notably teachers and parents--of its resource facility;

--a consideration of the Project's possible applicability in other school settings.

The above themes have been explored within the context of the communities in which the Project operates. In addition, the inclusion of materials describing the work of the Project in previous years, and interviews with staff and participants about past events, serve to place the data within an historical and continuing context.

Main Findings of the Present Study

It was concluded, based on this intensive and sustained observation and analysis, that the Responsive Education Project is a successful and significant effort at school imporvement within the New York City school system, and elsewhere. This conclusion is based on comments and perceptions of the parents, teachers, administrators and children, who are direct participants within the program. Some of these participants have had up to eight years of continuous association with the Project.

The Project focuses an overwhelming share of its efforts on activities and structures that have a direct and immediate impact on children. The Responsive Education classrooms generally reflect curriculum that is considered by participants (including children) to be creative and geared towards children's interests and their stages of intellectual and social development. The Learning Communities create opportunities for cross-age learning relationships for children. Teachers belonging to these Learning Communities (a detailed description of this phenomenon appears in Chapter IV) meet together regularly to engage in joint curriculum planning, to exchange ideas about successful or problematic classroom strategies, to discuss children's development, and to discuss additional support for a particular child. In meeting with parents, the Project staff encourages efforts that are conducive to greater opportunities for children's learning and well-being. (Descriptions of lunchroom environment improvement, staffing of resource rooms by parents, and staffing of corridors by parents are presented in the text). This

approach may be in contrast to other situations where school intervention is undertaken with little impact on the learning and social environment of the children.

The Project places a strong reliance on philosophical and theoretical concepts gained from a combination of sources in addition to those formulated by the Project staff, particularly the Director. These concepts serve to guide its strategy in the schools. Staff members verbalize these concepts to support or explain a certain strategy that they are advocating. It appears too, that the Project's philosophy and its strategy within the daily school setting, are consistent with each other. (Examples of the concepts, their origin and their connection with certain actions of the Project staff, are provided in Chapter VII.) It is further concluded that these philosophical concepts are used as a basis by Project participants, such as parents and teachers, to guide their actions. This is not of course to impute that Project participants enter the Responsive Education Project without prior theoretical and philosophical leanings, which may or may not be consistent with those of the Project, but that participants have a largely shared view of the world, which they describe and implement.

Through its activities the Project brings different constituents of the school into joint action. Parents, teachers, administrators, and maintenance staff have been observed to plan and work together. However, the strategy appears not merely to be to bring these different constituents together but to collaborate actively to benefit children. Examples are the mural project, the lunchroom project, the parent's room and resource center, the use of the corridor, and several others.

The Responsive Education Project has wide applicability in diverse school settings. The Project is primarily concerned with children's learning. The absence of complicated materials and procedures, and the Project's reliance on the human resources of the school, make this a project worthy of serious consideration for persons engaged in redefining the content and the context of learning in schools and concerned with the increasing depersonalization of schools. However, it would appear that a further appraisal of the Project's strategies would need to be made to attest to their appropriateness in inner-city schools with extremely limited resources, and where larger problems such as inadequate housing and the lack of social services are more acutely felt. In such instances, an approach that relates more directly to these problems, or at least includes these issues within its consideration of school improvement, may be necessary. Also, theoretical concepts such as teacher voluntarism and parent participation may need to be expanded to provide for strategies that are more compatible with the needs of certain schools. For example, teacher accountability may be a more serious consideration in school communities where parents are unable to be present and actively participative in the school. Teacher voluntarism in such instances may not go far enough. Notions of parent participation, particularly in instances where parents do not initiate this participation, may need to include continual monitoring of parents' views of the innovation, so that parents are kept abreast of development at all stages of the innovation.

CHAPTER II: THE SCHOOLS AND THE COMMUNITY

ABSTRACT

The development of the Learning Community Program in three of the nine elementary schools, in which the Project currently works, is described. Also provided are general observations on the community in which the schools are located, as well as the historical circumstances under which the Program originated and developed. The following major points are made:

a) The Program is most successful where there is an ethnic and economic mix of students.

b) By and large, the Program is not present in the poorest and most segregated schools in the district in which the Project operates, though it does presently work in one mostly Black Bricktown school.

c) In schools where it has been most successful, the Project received initial support from parents who were predominantly white and active. (See Chapter V for a description of how parent support is now more broadly based and includes Black and Hispanic parents among its most active participants.)

d) The Program may need to make more comprehensive approaches, which are not strictly curriculum centered, to gain acceptance into those inner-city schools which have serious problems of inadequate housing and generally poor social services.

e) In the most successful schools, the Program was able to draw upon and maintain interest among the teachers who participaterd voluntarily in the Program. However, in schools where teachers do not volunteer, and where parents are unable to participate on a regular basis, the Program may need to explore more comprehensive approaches.

f) The Program has been the basis for drawing more resources into the schools in which it has been most successful. Other consultant groups have brought programs into the schools, riding on the coattails of the Learning Community Program.

THE SCHOOL AND THE COMMUNITY

In this chapter, three of the nine schools, in which the Project works, are described in detail. These are: School A, the Katherine Mansfield School; School B, the Abe Branch School; and School C. Of these, School A and School B received advisory support from NIE-funded assisters.* In the third school, School C, the assister is paid out of local school district funds. However, before launching into a description of these schools vis-a-vis their experience with the Learning Community Program, some general observations will be made about the Program in the nine schools, about the community and the school district in which the schools are situated, and about the historical circumstances that contributed to the establishment of the Learning Community Program in these schools.

The Learning Community Program is in nine schools in District R in this current funding period. This means that at this time, nine schools on the Upper West Side of Hattsville are provided with inservice support by assisters. It is important to make this point because the Open Education Project, as explicated by the Assister's Service and University Center, does currently exist in other schools in New York City and elsewhere. This is because personnel trained over the past eight years have taken positions as teachers, Early Childhood coordinators, assistant principals and assisters in other school settings. For the purpose of this study, however, we are concerned with those schools that have on-site assisters who are

*i.e., These schools have an on-site assister from the Assister's Service to provide ongoing help in implementing the Program. (See Glossary of Terms.)

currently on the payroll of the Project. Five assisters service these nine schools. These schools are characterized as being at "various stages of Learning Community development." For example, two schools have had continuous assister support since the Learning Community Program was instituted there eight years ago. This might be contrasted with the latest school to request assister support, about fourteen months ago. One of the earliest schools has five Learning Communities, each composed of between four and five teachers, each with a class of about thirty children. The newest school has no Learning Communities, and an assister is offering assistance to four teachers, as a beginning step. The frequency of assister support varies from two days a week to once a month. In some of the earliest Learning Community schools, teachers are so experienced that they lead weekly Learning Community meetings. In the newest school, the four teachers are exploring with their assister some fundamental ways in which they might reorganize their classrooms into activity-centered areas. The point of this chapter is to convey the apparently highly individualized development of the Learning Community Program in each school.

The Local School District

The following is a description of the district in which the host schools are situated. District headquarters are located in the basement of School A.

> Hattsville's District R is a multi-lingual and multi-cultural community consisting of a variety of ethnic and economic groups. Small pockets of prosperity are interwoven in a blanket of poverty. The geographic boundaries of the District extend from Main Street to West Second Street, along the West Side of Hattsville, and from West Second Street to West Fourth Street in South Central Bricktown.

There are 19 elementary and 4 Junior and Intermediate Schools in District R. All of these schools are Title I eligible.

The District administers an extensive educational program under various Title fundings, including Title I, Title VII, ESEA (Bilingual), ESEA, Title VIII (Demonstration Health and Nutrition).

The District's full complement of staff numbers over 1,500 members. This number includes 450 paraprofessionals, 190 school aides, 75 supervisory and 21 guidance counselors.

The official estimate of ethnic composition of pupil population, after elementary level as of October 31, 1976 is as follows: Black 49.25%, Puerto Rican 21.39%, Other Spanish Surnamed 14.27%, American Indian .03%, Asian or Pacific Islander 1.98%, White 12.92%. (composite prepared from District-supplied data)

The student population size of the nine Learning Community schools varies from 362 in School E to 978 in School A. The average student population of these schools is a little over 780. School B has 882 and School C has 639 students.

The census data offer some interesting insights about the ethnic characteristics of the nine Learning Community schools. The Learning Community Program operates in those schools, which have a mix of Blacks, whites, Hispanics and other ethnic groups. The district data make a distinction between Puerto Rican students and other Spanish surnamed students, but I am considering these two groups under the collective designation of Hispanic. Thus, of the two schools which are the major focus of this study, School A has approximately 23% Black, 32% Hispanic and 40% white. In School B, the student population breakdown is 23% of Black, 23% Hispanic and 29% white. The majority of the non-Learning Community schools, which also number nine (we are speaking only of elementary schools), are predominantly Black

(or predominantly Hispanic, as in the case of School F), i.e., over 80% Black with five schools being over 90% Black. There are exceptions to the statement made above that the Learning Community Program operates only in schools with a racial and ethnic mix. It does work in <u>one</u> school, School C, which is 99% Black. It does <u>not</u> work in School G, which has an ethnic mix of 42% Blacks, 39% Hispanics and 12% white.

FIGURE I: EXAMPLE OF STATISTICAL INFORMATION COLLECTED BY THE PROJECT FOR ITS OWN INFORMATION ABOUT ITS USER SCHOOLS*

School #1:

Principal

Asst. Principal

Supervisors

Assisters (TAG personnel) of (Names have been omitted for reasons of confidentiality.)

Number of Learning Communities----------3
Number of classrooms in each Community:
first floor----------6
second floor----------5 (1 tangential)
third floor----------8

Number of mixed-age group classes----------17
Number of bilingual classes in Learning Communities----------6
Total number of bilingual classes in school----------6

Special programs in school:

OREA
Teachers and Authors Collaborative
PLAY
Peace Project
Learning Community Program
Arts in Public Education

Approximate ethnic composition of student population:

Hispanic: 35%
Black: 20%
Other: 45%

Student Teachers----------15

What colleges do they come from?

Central University Haven University Hamptom College Unity College

*Data collected in fall 1975. Does not reflect later staff changes, student population changes or Learning Community regroupings.

In School A, School B, and School D--schools in which the Program has a long history--the white student population is more than twice as large as district-wide percentages. However, it also works in three schools in which the white population is less than the district-wide totals. It is possible that the Learning Community Program is situated in schools which have a larger percentage of middle-class students of all ethnic groups, than most of the non-Learning Community schools. However, it should be noted that all the elementary schools in the district are Title I eligible.

For the purposes of this study, I will offer some descriptions and analyses of the two schools which are the focus of NIE study, School A and School B. Additional observations were carried out at the all Black Bricktown school, School C. In all schools, the Learning Community Program is operative in parts of the schools and not in the entire schools. There is no school that is exclusively a Learning Community school. All Learning Community Programs began as parts of schools and expanded (or diminished) to their present size, in each school.

School A

Also known as the Katherine Mansfield School, School A, with its student population of slightly under a thousand, is located on Third Street and Alpha Avenue. Across the street is a home for the elderly. On its north side is a large auto repair shop and service station. Two large public playgrounds, used throughout the day by middle and upper grade children, lie behind it. Younger children use the school's own playground, one wall of which has recently been adorned

with a mural painted by children, teachers and the principal, under the auspices of the Assister's Service and University Center. On the south side of the building are two welfare hotels, and some of its residents, mostly Black males, may often be seen sitting by the back gates of the school, drinking, playing cards and, in a few cases, begging. (Three of them became incidentally involved in the mural project undertaken by School A.) Tall apartment buildings surround the school. Beyond the school, two blocks away to the west, lies Oakton Park (which stretches along the entire western length of the school district).

School B

School B is also known as the Abe Branch School. It was the third school to implement the Program, which was started in 1968. Located on West Second Street about half a block from Oakton Park, it has 882 students, which makes it slightly smaller in student size than School A. It is also a more modern building; its corridor spaces are wider, with all classrooms opening out onto them. In contrast, School A's corridors are set at right angles to one another, making them shorter, more broken up and narrower. School B also has the additional advantage of having well-lighted corridor spaces, because all the classrooms are arranged on one side, and the other side is filled with large windows. The fine old residential buildings on West Second Street contrast with the more recent lower income and middle-income City housing on Delcore and Sander Avenues. It is likely that there is ethnic and economic stratification in the housing patterns described above, though this has not been documented as part

of this study. A large city playground is used by its students, as is the park. Two blocks away is an old riding stable that is still in use, mostly by the wealthyresidents of the East Side. Adjoining the playground is a Community House whose programs are used by the school's students and their parents.

Sundry observations made about these two schools give some flavor of their status in this community. School B was the first school in the City to challenge the Central Board's ruling that teachers who are "excessed"* should report to other schools. Its parents placed themselves physically before the school gates, preventing excessed teachers from other schools from entering the school. This strategy was successful and they retained all their own excessed teachers. This school refused to implement the shortened school day resulting from a cut of ninety minutes in instructional time per week as ordered by the Central Board, and along with School H, another Learning Community school, led other Learning Community schools and other city schools in this fight, and succeeded in keeping their schools open for the full day, until schools closed for summer vacation and fresh cuts were instituted. Central Board officials came personally to the school, once with the police, to attempt to implement the shortened day, but they were unsuccessful. The Board then brought a civil suit against the parents of School District R, and they replied with a countersuit, represented by lawyers from among the parents. As for

*Teaching staff found to be "in excess" of the Board of Education's payroll as a result of the city-wide fiscal crisis. Teachers were transferred to other schools based on their seniority in the school system.

School A, it was declassified as a Title I school, but the principal and the parents took the Federal Government to court and its Title I status was restored. This school's principal, who is Hispanic, was involved in a landmark decision several years ago, when he refused to accept the Central Board's licensing requirements for the position of principal, asserting that these were culturally biased. He won. He is also a community principal, having been appointed under the decentralization law, by parents and community members.

One assister describes School A as "battle scarred." She went on, "School A is special; nothing comes easy to this school." Its "battle scarred" character had its origins in 1968, when efforts were being made (or not being made) to decentralize the city's system of elementary and secondary education. Veteran parents* of these two schools were active in writing the original decentralization law. At the same time, some of these parents were "also fighting to have balanced classes to replace the so-called ability groupings of children, which if you want to know were racist." A teacher who is also a parent in this schools remembers:

> When I started at School A, it was a very traditional school. It even had IGC classes (Intellectually Gifted) and every class was homogeneously grouped. That year was also the time for the greatest struggle in the district around decentralization. The decentralization districts had just been formed in the Tower neighborhood, I.S.A, and Riverview. Ours was supposed to be the fourth demonstration district. The schools that fed into Sappho [Junior High] were supposed to elect their own governing Board. However, the Board of Education decided that they would

*Parents who have acted as a support group for the Learning Community Program in the schools.

not include our district among the decentralized districts. Parents in this community got very upset and formed their own group called Fighting for Decentralization, or something like that, and really politicked within the schools, which really upset many of the teachers, and the principal of School A. My husband ran for that governing Board and was elected, which didn't endear me to her (the principal) at all.

I walked into the classroom one time. Either picking her (my daughter) up or something. I realized that there was one important fact. All the children in that class were white. So I went to the principal who by that time was a woman called --, about this. I couldn't understand how people operate this way. So she told me that my daughter was very bright. I said, "Well, how do you know that; she has never been tested; how do you know that she is bright?" So apparently, the indication of the child's brightness was that her father taught at University level and I thought that was pretty disgusting. The more I thought about it, the more I realized and found out that the teacher refused to teach Black kids and this was tolerated by the school.

School A was known as a very fine school because of its very high reading scores. That's all anybody knew about it, but it was dead. And then there was all this racism; but the teachers were locked in their own class rooms doing their own thing and so long as there were those high MAT scores, and so long as we were the first or the second best reading score in New York State, that was all that counted....

Now classes in this school, in contrast, are said, and appear from informal observations, to be heterogeneously grouped in terms of age, ability and race. The Learning Community Program has worked from the beginning to have heterogeneous grouping, and indeed, this Program was sought out by parents and teachers who were interested in heterogeneous classes. A teacher states:

The state mandated Balanced Class Project (parents in this district worked to get their district to enforce the Balanced Class Project and approved the appointment of officials at the district level to enforce it in their schools) had an important outcome.

> Schools in District R are not on an academic track. Thus, children are not placed in classes according to read-ing ability as measured by standardized tests--they are heterogeneously grouped, regardless of test scores. The M.T (Metropolitan Achievement Test) is administered, but it does not affect grouping of children as happens in every other school district in the city. Thus, the project's own philosophical concept of heterogeneity received administrative support through the Balanced Class Project mandate.
>
> We worked to balance the classes, so that the classes might be heterogeneously grouped, more so than any other school in the district, and many of the teachers and parents on that committee (set up by the Balanced Class Project) were very concerned about how teachers were going to teach with children at all levels. It was this concern that led us to explore other kinds of teaching that were just beginning in parts of the city. Lillian Weber, Learning Community Program Director, had just begun at School I, and some people knew about it, and the people at School A invited Marian to speak at our school.-
> ...(emphasis added)

Among the features of School A, as in School B and others, are the bilingual Learning Community classrooms, usually one in each grade level. School A is reputed to have the finest bilingual program in the district, due to the fact that the principal himself is Hispanic, and he is said to have been very active in recruiting able bilingual teachers for his school. He hired experienced teachers who are equally fluent in English and Spanish and are, in some cases, native speakers of Spanish.*

It is noted that the majority of the Learning Community teachers live in the Upper West Side community and have lived there for several

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*Particularly in the late 1960's, in the rush to provide bilingual services in schools, teachers were quickly licensed to teach as bilingual teachers. However, the majority of them were not native speakers of Spanish and, in many instances, had only to take and pass a three-week crash course in Spanish.

years. In the period of this study, eleven out of fifteen Learning Community teachers in one school, live in their community. At least three own co-op apartments on the Upper West Side. A teacher speaks of her feeling for the West Side:

> I wouldn't go to a private school nor would I send my children to a private school. I opted to live not only in the city, but I live on the West Side, because I think it is a community and I think it is a viable community, and it is the place where I want to raise my children. I like what the West Side stands for and I like the mix and opted for the mix. I want my children to grow up in a real world, a heterogeneous, difficult world. I wanted to teach in a school that reflected that community with all of its difficulties and all of the wonderful things that happen too. So I sent my children to School A. Now, two of them are out and one is left, and I have never thought of teaching in a private school. I don't believe in that elite kind of thing....

It may also be noted that the Learning Community Program attracted a core of older, experienced teachers to this school, who have been the mainstay of the program. There are five teachers who may be identified as being part of this core and who have worked with the Assister's Service from the time they first came into the school. These teachers, interestingly enough, are about the age of the veteran parents, and may be characterized as coming out of that same era of liberal activism that represents the 1960's. Their many years of experience and their high professional standing, are presumably to their advantage when relating to parents. The Project Director has remarked that the interest of older teachers in the Learning Community Program

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*Teachers are being retained in the city's schools or are being transferred or laid off on the basis of the number of years they have taught. Currently, the cutoff point is seven years, and is anticipated to be pushed further back with the next round of budget cuts.

gives the lie to the common assumption "that Responsive Education attracts only the youngest teachers, just out of college and who play the guitar and weave and so on." Significantly, in this current budget crisis, this core of older teachers, by virtue of their many years of seniority* within the system, have provided an anchor for the continuation of the Learning Community Program in this school. In contrast, in School B, the majority of Learning Community teachers, who are relatively younger, have been lost or temporarily removed from the school in the wake of termination and transfer notices served upon them, thus severely debilitating the Learning Community in that school.

A comprehensive study of the community that is reflected in the schools has not been made, nor was it intended. But conversations with parents, as well as the observations of teachers and students, testify to the fact that both schools represent the spectrum of culture and race, ethnicity and economics found in the Upper West Side community. The children are the sons and daughters of newspaper editors, university professors, welfare recipients, apartment building superintendents, secretaries, car mechanics, etc. Whether this mix is maintained outside the school and whether children and parents mingle socially after school hours are questions that are beyond the scope of this study.

The Learning Community Program is the most widespread instructional alternative offered in these two schools. At School A, the two major styles of instruction (see Figure IV: Educational Classification Scheme) are the Learning Community and the More

Traditional. Currently there are 17 Learning Community classes and 11 More Traditional classes. The Bilingual Instruction classes are a third major form of instruction but the majority of these are considered to be (and are so designated) Learning Community classrooms. At School B, the three options offered are The Learning Community, Traditional and Bilingual modes of education. Currently, this school has 31 Learning Community classes and 5 Traditional classes. In this school, where the Bilingual classes are not as closely associated with the Learning Community, they are offered as a separate option by the school. In addition, both of these schools offer several options for special enrichment programs, such as the Teachers and Authors Collaborative, the Peace Project, PLAY, Hinsdale Music Program and several others. School A, in addition, is also part of the AIPE project (Arts in Public Education), a collaborative venture of the LPR III Fund and the Central Board of Education.

A point may be made about the different educational options and the special enrichment programs like PLAY and The Teachers and Authors Collaborative. Parents generally appear to have the right to select the program that they consider would be most suitable for their children. This right appears to operate as a combination of the parents' wishes, the child's preference, the teacher's recommendations, and the administrative determination of availability (based upon such considerations as class size). Several parents have one child in a More Traditional class, while another is in a Learning Community classroom. One active Black parent has one child in School B and another in School A with two teachers she selected--one teacher

on the basis of the fact that "she is Oriental" and the other because she "is motherly and that's what my child needs right now."

In both of these schools, it has been observed that parents, whatever educational choices they have made on behalf of their children, do work together on matters on common interest. During the budget crisis, which affected schools throughout the past year, and continues to affect them, parents demonstrated side by side to retain teachers and paraprofessionals, to retain certain special programs, and to retain Title I status which School A lost temporarily and regained after a court battle. It has been regained after a court battle. It has been observed, that all the parents are conscious of the necessity to distribute school resources equitably. Thus More Traditional parents have complained on occasion that their children's classes may be inadequately staffed with paraprofessionals, or that student teachers are not placed in their classrooms or they don't receive enough of their share of monies to be spent on materials. One Learning Community teacher observes that student teachers, for example, are not looking for practical training in traditional methods, nor is a teacher-directed Traditional classroom as needful of paraprofessionals as a Learning Community classroom. A Learning Community classroom focuses on small group and individualized learning, and has a heavy emphasis on manipulative and exploratory materials, while the Traditional classroom, places a greater emphasis on book learning.

> For a long time the More Traditional classes were very upset because Learning Community people were getting special training, and there was no special training for the traditional teacher. At other times, some parents complained that the Learning Community was getting all the funding and that the other classes weren't equally funded, or that all the special

> programs that came into the school went into the Learning Community because the Learning Community had made the school open and accessible to the outside. Now that they are in, let's have the goodies, but they certainly wouldn't come in if the whole school looked like that. Or that the Learning Community was getting all the student teachers. But it's what the student teachers come for, not whole-class teaching and passive kids. (teacher assister)

It has been observed that there is a blurring of the lines between these two major styles of instruction, i.e., Learning Community and More Traditional. This is particularly noticeable in School A, which has a larger complement of More Traditional classrooms. The More Traditionalclassrooms observed in this school are not traditional in the same sense that classrooms are in exclusively traditional schools. In the more Traditional classrooms at School A and School B, children are engaged in group projects. The desks are not arranged in rigid rows one behind the other. Once, in one of the most rigid of these classrooms, the children were observed for a brief time in the corridor outside their classroom, on the floor drawing and coloring. The bilingual parent facilitator at School A remarked on the activities of a More Traditional class:

> Well, I never go into classes where I am not welcome, but when I am going past I look in. Well, this-- (name of More Traditional teacher) and her class were studying the ancient Romans and they made this huge construction of the Roman Empire. It took the whole back of the class. So one day after school I went into this class to see, and I took -- and -- and -- (all Learning Community teachers) and they were surprised. It was beautiful. The next day I went to that teacher and I said to her, "Look, it's fantastic what you did with the kids. I showed it to some of the teachers." And she replied, "Well, the kids just went ahead and did it." At least she didn't stop them. Now, that's quite different from years ago, when the children sat in their places and had their books in front of them and that was it.

Another reason for the blurring in definition between the Learning Community and the More Traditional styles of education is that the very premise upon which the Learning Community is founded is that teacher development should be organic and interactive and should build upon the teacher's understanding at a certain point in that teacher's growth. This means that teachers may be at various levels of development and may not be ready for certain changes that the program calls for, and that the teacher's readiness needs to be encouraged through gradual development. As a specific example, the Learning Community Program, while it works actively for parent involvement, does not make parent involvement a requirement for the parent or for the teacher. Thus, a comment such as the one which follows, by a parent:

> There has to be some standard regarding teacher relationships to parents. The Learning Community Program says that it welcomes parents. Yet, I have one child in an LC class and another in a More Traditional class. But I feel welcome in my child's More Traditional class and I have never been invited to visit my younger child's class which is a Learning Community class. (during a meeting of the Learning Community Support Committee, composed of parents)

In concluding my comments on Schools A and B, I include a quote from a teacher who has taught for many years in one of these Learning Community schools:

> I visited other schools in the district and then I came back and said, "We don't know what we have here. This really is a special place." It's a place where we are really involved with kids and Learning Community is not just lip service. People here really believe in what they're doing and you don't find that any place else. It's crazy--lots of times in schools you walk about trembling because of the nervous energy that fills your body, and what that produces in terms of how people work together, and how kids relate to you and how you relate to kids, and how kids can really be learning through their own interests. There is such risk-taking and learning in (my) school that nothing is safe in that school, and it's fantastic. People really go almost to the edge, children and teachers together. It is really remarkable.

School C

School C is smaller than either A or B (population 644), and is located in Uptown Hattville, on Court Street off Casey Avenue. It has a shabby, rundown frontage in contrast to the other two schools. The street, however, is lined with charming, well-maintained brownstones. This school was among the earliest to implement the Learning Community Program in the late 60's. However, whereas School A and B have generally expanded their program, although the past two years saw a severe attrition due to city-wide cuts in personnel and services, School C presently has one Learning Community run by a white teacher, who was formerly a teacher-assister, but was excessed into this school last year. In the past, extensive use of the corridor walls was made to display the children's art, and the children have also, infrequently, used the corridor for larger projects, as in the other schools. The Black assister who was assigned part-time to this school (her parents were immigrants from the West Indies) until she left the Assisters' Service last year, ascribes the rejuvenation of the Learning Community Program to the entrance of this teacher into the school.

> That -- (teacher) is a past master. If she was nervous, she never showed it. She invited -- (a Black teacher who had taught in this school when the Learning Community Program was first introduced) to eat lunch with her. Then she says, "--, I'll tell you when we are going on a trip, so you can come with us." Or like last time, "Look, I have the bus schedule for trips. You better book early, or you won't get on that bus." Poor --. She doesn't stand a chance. I said to -- "That -- is g-o-o-d. So take what you can get. Take what you can."

On the occasions I visited the school, two other teachers on the same floor were observed to come into this room to eat lunch. The assister added,

> When she (another teacher, white) saw that -- had a student teacher from Central University, she wanted one too. She keeps asking me, "When am I going to get a student teacher?" But I think at this moment, she thinks a student teacher will do her work for her. And Mrs. -- (another Black teacher) well, she saw --'s animal cage, and now she would like one. And -- asked me for a rug (for her reading corner).

I asked this assister if she knew about School C's history with the program. She stated, "This school was a showpiece. People came from everywhere to see it." It appears that the teachers who were most active at that time were three white teachers. Two Black teachers were also associated with the Program. It was stated by the assister, that from what she had heard, classroom management difficulties became an increasingly important issue. For example, there was a problem with children being asked to sit on the floor, that animal droppings were not cleaned up, the rooms became "filthy" because the custodians "just weren't ready for this." She added, "You cannot offer filth to these people. They are struggling out of it." She says that she heard that the parents had come into the school and demanded that the animal cages be removed and that the rooms be swept. She said that the three white teachers had left shortly after that. She said that she heard that one of the white teachers, a male, has 'ripped off' the school, "that he moved a truck up to the sidewalk one day, and drove it all away." This assister continues,

> When I went in there (several years after these incidents), -- (the Principal who is a Black woman) said to me, "I am letting you in here because I know you." I went to school with her. So then I said to her, "Come on now, let me try to get something done here with this teacher or that." She lets me do a little here and there.

In a taped interview with the Principal, a Black woman, I asked if the Learning Community Program, while pratically non-existent, had through its past development, contributed to the general atmosphere of warmth and accessibility that I said I had experienced in the school. She said she didn't think so, that "We have had this feeling here, and I don't think it

has anything to do with the Learning Community." In what appeared to be an indirect reference to the past history of the Learning Community Program, she stated that parents had to be kept informed about the Program and its strengths. To illustrate the need in this area.

On one visit, I accompanied a first grade class to see a play in the school auditorium. The play was "Mame". The children performed superbly, the costumes were expensive looking, the props carefully made. The principal was extremely proud of the play, as was the Black music teacher, and in the evening it was put on for the parents. The play has lyrics such as "the South will revive again" and Aunt Mame is feted as "the queen of the plantation." The present assister to that school, who is white, observed that at in contrast School A, a Black teacher had refused to let her class sing "The Ballad of the Americans" because the lyrics described "Thomas Jefferson as a very fine man." She add-ed, "The consciousness at School A is very different than at School C."

It appears that the Open Education has continued its efforts in this school despite setbacks, and the school in turn has not completely withdrawn from the Project's work in the school. It appears, therefore, that the Project has made most progress in those schools in which there is strong advocacy on behalf of the Project by parents, teachers and administrators. In School A and School B, the Project was <u>actively sought</u> by, <u>approved</u> by, and <u>recruited</u> by parents for implementation in their schools. Where advocacy does not exist, it appears that the Project must make additional efforts to convey its goals at every step, explain its activities, and invite support from parents, teachers and administrators. Also, cultural traits and perspectives need to be monitored continually, and program implementation tied closely to the information gained from such monitoring.

points that are made here have implications for such Project strategies and practices as voluntary participation, parent involvement, heterogeneity and creation of community. These receive further treatment in subsequent pages. The most developed Learning Community Schools each have several hundereds of visitors every year from all over the country, and it is possible that "the exemplar" has meaning and significance to many of these visitors and does offer some directions for school change.

Finally, I end this chapter with a quote from the Program Director about how the Program viewed, and continues to view its efforts:

> It was never our intention to attempt to convince the whole New York City school system that they should go this way. We had never hoped to achieve this much. It was always our intention to work in a small way to create an exemplar of what could be possible in the public schools of New York City. So we have worked consistently in these schools, developing within the range of possibility and environment supportive to children's growth. It's a gradual, growing thing. And people come and see what is being done and they go away and start thinking about it and maybe trying in their own way, in their own communities, something in this direction. The most developed Learning Community Schools each have several hundreds of visitors every year from all over the country, and it is possible that "the exemplar" has meaning and significance to many of these visitors and does offer some directions for school change. (Director of Program)

CHAPTER III: OPEN EDUCATION: STRUCTURES, ROLES AND RELATIONSHIPS

ABSTRACT

The Open Education Project has three major organizational components that enable it to deliver assistance to the schools in which it works: 1) The Assisters' Service, which consists of staff members who work directly in schools on a regular basis assisting teachers, parents, administrators and other school personnel in implementing the Learning Community Program; 2) The University Center, which is a resource facility, that in the past two years served over 5000 teachers a year, and which also serves as the headquarters of the Project; 3) The Learning Community Program, which is the organizational structure implemented in the schools, and which in its daily workings consists of interrelated mini-communities of between four and six teachers and their classes of between 30 and 35 children.

The roles in the Open Education Project are characterized by complementarity, varied ability, and interchangeability. The Project staff has a cohesive philosophy which is characterized by shared assumptions about children's learning, teacher development, and the nature of school change. Organizationally, the Project operates under strong centralized leadership together with regional autonomy for assisters. The Project relationship with Central University of New York is seen as placing the Project in a generally advantageous position to gain entry into schools, to provide teacher training both at the preservice and inservice levels, as well as to draw upon qualified personnel, space, materials and other services.

THE OPEN EDUCATION PROJECT: STRUCTURES, ROLES AND RELATIONSHIPS

The Open Education Project is approaching the completion of a decade of work in the public schools of New York City. It is composed of three major organizational structures: The Learning Community Program, The Assisters' Service, and The University Center. Capsule descriptions follow:

> The Learning Community. The Program currently works nine elementary schools. In each of these schools there are Learning Communities consisting of interrelated mini-groups of between 4-6 teachers, each with a class of between 30-35 children. The Communities have generally developed from the voluntary, or at least consenting, participation of teachers in the program who expressed their willingness to work with each other. Some Learning Communities resulted from the parents' interest in the Program, and in many instances from their active efforts to recruit the Program's services for their schools. Administrative facilitation of teacher groupings, scheduling of prep periods and lunch periods, and other types of cooperation are features of well-developed Learning Communities. The number of Learning Communities varies in each school, from five to one. (See Chapter II: "The Schools and the Community" for a more complete description.)
>
> The Assisters' Service. Open Education staff members who work directly on-site in schools are known as Assisters. Staff members who are assigned to the University Center are also known as Assisters. Assisters' Service is the collective term for staff members who provide assistance to teachers, parents, children, administrators and the community at large, both in the schools and at the University Center.
>
> The University Center. This is a resource center, equipped with curriculum materials housed in three former physics labs. It is used annually by five thousand teachers, most of whom come from New York City elementary schools. These users are, for the most part, teachers who are working alone, or with another teacher, in schools generally unsupportive of Open Education efforts. The staff which relates

to these teachers is also called Assisters, or more specifically, University Center Assisters, to distinguish them from the school-based assisters. The University Center, in addition, hosts the Parent Breakfast meetings, held once monthly, during which parents join the Assisters' Service; the Saturday Parent-Child Workshops; the Friday Assisters' Development sessions; the daily workshops for Central University students; and the evening workshops for teachers.

Below I analyse the organizational and other features of these three structures, their relationships to one another and the roles inherent in each.

Complementarity, Varied Ability, Interchangeability

Within the framework of a capacity for problem solving, one notes the complementarity of the Project's two organizational components, the Assisters' Service and the University Center, both of which support the third organizational component, the Learning Communities in the schools. Each appears to provide back-up support and resources for the more efficient funtioning of the other in their relationship to schools. The Assisters' Service is composed of staff members known as assisters, who work on-site in schools on a regular basis, providing inservice support and training for teachers. Their work also brings them into regular contact with parents and principals and with other school staff. The University Center, on the other hand, mainly serves teachers who do not have the benefit of assister service in their schools and who are working, often individually, towards learning community style in schools whose administrations are largely unsympathetic to their efforts. Thus, each component attempts to affect schools and teachers at different stages in their personal and institutional development. The District R schools comprise the fieldwork component of Assisters' Service work, while the University Center serves as a facility where the assisters themselves undergo further professional training with the Director. Thus the University Center also serves as a meeting and training ground for those school constituencies that are not reached by the Assisters' Service with the same intensity as they reach teachers. The University Center becomes the avenue for training and discussion sessions with parents. It is the place where paraprofessionals come for monthly workshops as well as to work individually on projects that interest them. In past

years, the principals of Learning Community schools participate in "professional development sessions" at the Center. The Assisters' Service is the school-based component while the University Center is the external component. In addition, the University Center, by virtue of its very location within Central University and by virtue of the fact that the Project's Director is herself a Professor of Education, has other links with the University, thus providing the Project with an opportunity to have an impact upon the training of teachers. This point viz project relationship to the University is developed on p. 58.

Another feature of the Project's strength is the varied abilities of its personnel. Its staff possesses, first, a baseline of knowledge about responsive education, and, secondly, what may best be termed "special interests." All assisters are experienced teachers, who have worked for many years in elementary schools, and who have worked as Responsive Education teachers in the past. Assisters are knowledgeable about classroom reorganization, curriculum extensions, and child development within the context of Open Education. In addition, assisters have special abilities or interests. For example, an assister may be "good" at math while another is "good at carpentry. One may lead a seminary for parents while the other may lead them in creative movement. Thus the baseline of knowledge about Open Education gives this group a shared understanding of what Open Education is. This group has shared assumptions about what math materials to use with a certain age group of children, or about the way an assister might engage the interest of a teacher who needs help in developing individualized reading activities for a mixed group of third and fourth graders. These shared assumptions make it possible for individual members

of the Assisters' Service to be interchangeable. An assister functions substantially in the same way as her/his colleague, though her/his style may be unique. This quality of interchangeability is illustrated particularly when a pair of assisters or a small group of assisters are talking together about a particular teacher or teachers with whom they work. There is a great deal of agreement among them about perceptions of the problems and the solutions offered. Sometimes, this understanding appears to be so deep, as in the case of two assisters who have worked together for some time in a particular school, that their language is telepathic. This interchangeability appears to serve another function. It presents a clearly defined, cohesive group of persons to the teachers, school administrators, and parents with whom they can work.

At the same time, this interchangeability is balanced by the fact that the assisters have special interests and special abilities which make them highly individual--an individuality that is sought after by the teachers with whom they work. This spectrum of special skills and abilities makes it possible for the Project to offer these, in addition to the baseline knowledge that the assisters have in Open Education, to teachers and other school staff. Thus, a staff member came to work in a particular school because a teacher there expressed the desire to build a loft in his classroom. Another assister worked for several weeks with a group of children who wanted to study creative movement. This versatility makes it possible for the Project's staff to relate to teachers at many points in the teacher's development and gives them the flexibility of trying any one of a number of approaches. In other words, the assisters are sound "generalists", who have a considerable understanding of, and experience with,

Open Education ideas and concepts. They are specialists who have a "bag of tricks" or special skills that they can offer, to attract and stimulate teachers.

Cohesive Philosophy, Unitary Purpose

The first and most general observation to be made here, and which is made in slightly different ways throughout this study, is the cohesiveness of the Project's staff. By this is meant that all Project staff members share common assumptions about the nature of children's learning; have a shared view about children's development; agree that teachers' professional learning, just like children's learning, is interactive, dynamic and developmental; agree that school change itself involves an active ongoing interaction with all school constituents--teachers, parents, principals, and children; and believe that significant growth towards more positive school direction happens only over time and through consistent and sincere effort by all constituents. But the most basic characteristic that all Project staff share is their view of children. This view is the basis upon which they have come together to work: namely, each Project staff member, before they came to be associated with the project, was known to have a firm conviction that children are highly capable, intrinsically motivated individuals, but that their growth is, in general, inadequately met by the structures for compulsory education, namely the schools. This cohesiveness of view leads to the single purpose of creating and facilitating conditions in schools that, in the Project's estimation, are "conducive to the growth of children's strengths." Thus, one description might be that this is a cohesive group with a unitary purpose.

Centralized Leadership

A feature of the Project's organization is strong, centralized leadership. Professor Lillian Weber is the Founder-Director of the Project. A pioneer of Responsive Education in this country, Weber is acknowledged as one of the foremost authorities on educational practice at the elementary school level in the nation. Charles Silberman, in his book The Open Education Reader, assesses her work thus: "No American writer has had so lasting an impact on American practice as (Lillian Weber)."

The Educational Testing Service acknowledges her contribution to their own developing theories for research on Responsive Education. In Beyond Surface Curriculum they state:

> We are grateful to (Lillian Weber) for support and critical analysis of our work. We have gained much from her substantive views of teacher development; in general her perspectives have helped clarify our own.

She is the author of a book on Open Education (The British Infant School and Informal Learning) and numerous articles on staff development, educational priorities, and standarized testing. The Central Board of Education in N.Y.C awarded her a citation as "A Partner in Education" and she has received other honors.

In the context of the Project's structure, Weber is clearly what one assister describes as "the dominant and moving force of the Project." Another assister refers to her "as the chief formulator of educational direction in this country," observing further that "while so many other progressive educators worked in the private schools or in special lab schools, she has carried out all her work in the public schools of New York City." What

becomes clear in any sustained observation of the Project is that the Director is the ultimate decision-making authority. She is clearly the "Head of the Project". It is she who assigns assisters to the schools in which they serve. The various stages and steps of their training are formulated by her. As an illustration of this point, an assister described to this writer how she had worked in a particular school with another assister and, in the course of it, they had developed a very close working relationship. Then the Director had suggested that she undergo further apprenticeship training in another school with another assister. This assister recalled:

> When (the Director) told us that we were to work in separate schools we looked at each other. We had grown so close over the past year. I would start to say something and I wouldn't have to finish what I was saying because -- would understand, that's how close we were.

It is the Project Director who is the chief architect and the chief spokesperson on matters of program direction and policy.

> Prior to the start of the meeting, the Project Director reprimanded --sharply for his plan to initiate a meeting with two district officials. --denied that he had done so, stating that the Director had misread his intentions. The Director stated that such a meeting was her responsibility and could not be undertaken without her permission, especially at this delicate stage. Saying something about her bad cold she stated that she did not want to "discuss the matter any further."

During the current crisis, it was she who issued statements about possible actions that could be undertaken by the school in response to the fiscal crunch and the subsequent attrition of teaching staffs. Learning magazine, a national publication, contained her views on the crisis and the options open to schools, entitled "(Lillian Weber), Where are you Now?"

In that article, she states:

> The move toward informal or flexible classrooms is a persistent trend, a direction not be be denied. In spite of all the doom's dayers, we have more calls from teachers and principals for help and more willingness on the part of administrators to support greater flexibility and responsiveness. It is not system-wide by any means, but we have seen no retreat. We've seen an increase.

A publication of the Central Board of Education also contains an article by her entitled, "What is Prime?" which is briefly excerpted below:

> What is absolutely necessary to children? This question must be central to any discussion of the current situation in the New York City public schools. I think that at a point of pressure, it is easy to begin to talk about what a bad situation makes you do, as though the bad situation excuses working with children in a way that you know to be unproductive.
>
> ...You have to know what you are absolutely committed to first, and I think that that really is essential. Are you committed to the obligation of compulsory education, meaning that you must support and be committed to the path of development of each child? If so, then you proceed to figure out your strategy. (From Educational Options, published by the Learning Group, CBE)

In addition, the Project Director explore future funding sources, submits proposals, meets with funding agencies, speaks at national meetings (e.g., the meetings of teacher centers sponsored by the U.S. Office of Education and the recent national meetings on standardized testing in Washington, D.C.), lectures at other universities (e.g., a lecture on language development to a class at Harvard University), publications, etc.

It may be stated that the Project Director's authority is most clearly based on pedagogical leadership. Project staff freely acknowledge her superior understanding, grounded in many years of experience, of children's development and note her dedication to the furtherance of school settings

"more suitable for children." They acknowledge her years of experience as a well-recognized nursery school teacher and her present status as a respected Professor of Education. They recall that she was the first assister, that her formulations of the assister's role are based upon her own experiences in that role, and that she did her earliest work in some of the schools in which they currently serve as assisters themselves. Thus, her preeminence is based upon her expertise as a practitioner rather than as an administrator or facilitator. This theme of preeminence based on expertise and excellence, rather than upon "skills" of process facilitation and administrative techniques, is a recurring feature of the Project's organization (see Chapter IV).

FIGURE II: OPEN EDUCATION PROJECT:
DESCRIPTIVE SUMMARY

UNIVERSITY CENTER

A) Facility used by 5,000 teachers annually, open daily with curriculum areas in reading, crafts, etc.

B) Headquarters for Assister training.

C) Location for Parent Breakfasts with Assisters' Service. Saturday Parent-Child Workshops, District-Wide Paraprofessional Workshops, experienced teacher meetings, meetings of teachers, principals, parents featuring guest speakers, consultants, etc.

D) Headquarters for publications.

E) Office of Director, editor, administrators, clerical staff, volunteers.

STAFF

CL, Assister, part time
CS, Assister, full time
SB, Assister, full time
LW, Director, part time
MB, CU faculty, part time
NH, CU faculty, part time
LP, publications, part time
MT, administrator, part time
RB, clerical, full time
GS, clerical, occasional Assister
\+ 10-15 volunteers (parents, teachers)

ASSISTERS' SERVICE TO LEARNING COMMUNITIES

A) Work in schools, daily basis - approx. 3 days weekly.

B) Participate in inservice training through Friday Assisters' Professional Development sessions.

C) Also attend other training sessions, e.g., Vermont School.

D) Give workshops for paraprofessionals at University Center.

E) Participate in experienced teacher meetings.

F) Meet informally with parents, teachers, administrators at social events.

G) Write weekly logs of work in schools. Contribute to Project's publications.

H) Represent the Project at national, regional and local professional meetings.

STAFF	SCHOOLS
MG, Assister	School A & J
SH, Assister	School A, C, K
SM, Assister	School D, B, E,
TW, Assister	School B part time
SW, Assister	H, L, D, J
SA, Assister	School C, J (replaced SW, but no yet assigned)
BB, Assister (replaced SW, but not yet assigned)	
DK, bil. parent facil	School A
MH, bil. parent facil	School B

RACE, ETHNICITY, SEX BREAKDOWN OF PROJECT STAFF (as of June 1977)

University Center Assisters' Service + In-School Assisters:

3 Blacks, 5 white ethnics, 2 chinese, 2 Hispanics, 1 white undifferentiated
Total 13. 9 females, 4 males.

Support Staff:

1 white ethnic, 2 chinese, 1 white undifferentiated, total 4. 3 females, 1 male.

FIGURE III: ASSISTER'S RELATIONSHIPS WITH SUPERVISORS AND SCHOOL CONSTITUENTS

With Supervisors:	With School Constituents:
Assisters have professional membership within the Assisters' Service, supervised by the Project Director, and receive ongoing training here.	An assister works with parents but is not appointed by parents, employed by parent groups, or a member of any parent body.
They interact with school principals, but are neither appointed nor supervised by the principals.	The assister works directly with teachers and children but is not part of the school's supervisory framework and is not designated a teacher in the school.
A district-funded assister, draws salary from the local school district, has district level supervisors, follows certain district procedures, but receives ongoing professional training within the Assisters' Service.	The assister trains paraprofessionals but is not a supervisor of paraprofessionals.

Regional Autonomy

Along with the evidence of strong, centralized leadership is the evidence of autonomy of Assisters. (See Figure III.) The assisters work daily in schools, and it is apparent in watching them work that they exercise a great deal of flexibility and initiative in determining their relationship to teachers and administrators and the general direction of their work in their respective schools. The major proportion of the assister's time is spent in relating to teachers, principals and other administrators, and children. In these schools, the assister is usually working alone and without supervision, even though there is often more than one assister assigned to each school. In working with teachers and principals, the assister often makes judgements about program strategy, formulations for future work, and decisions in regard to particular teachers, parents, children, or administrators. An example illustrates this. A principal asked if an assister would help him in running a resource center. The following exchange ensued:

> Assister says, "You can count me out." When the principal asks her for her reason, she says it wouldn't work. She adds, "I have to first examine the educational implications of such a project." She goes on, "You say the younger children would use the satellite center. But you know that younger children cannot use it without a lot of help."

Assisters working in a particular school may have group discussions and make collective judgements about their future strategies for working with a group of teachers.

The individual school is the site of the assister's autonomy. One might even say that the assisters enjoy regional autonomy in that they have major responsibility for the focus and direction of their work in their

respective schools. The Project Director makes periodic visits to these schools to observe in the classrooms and to talk to teachers and to the principals, but it is the assister who maintains daily contact with teachers, parents, and principals. When the assister is not in the school, this contact is maintained through phone conversations, social meetings over dinner and meetings at the University Center.

The assisters keep records of their work in the schools, and it is mainly about these records that the Project Director and the assisters have their regular small group or individual meetings. These small group sessions differ from the Friday Assisters' Professional Development sessions because they focus more directly on the assister's work in his/her school and the discussion concentrates on the specific problems or concerns that are peculiar to one school. The Friday Assisters' Development sessions provide for the ongoing professional development of the Assisters' Service as a group. Of these sessions, one assister remarked, "I feel (the Project Director) is arming me to go back in the world." At these sessions, the Project Director, acting as teacher, provides information about upcoming events in which they will be involved, distributes resource literature, discusses topics at length, invites suggestions about the scheduling and planning of workshops, and requests assisters to report on the political conditions or morale in their schools.

What may be taken as a strong indication of assisters' autonomy is the fact that assisters speak of each other as having distinctive styles of work and as having a sound understanding of their school settings, the teachers they work with, and the problems they encounter in their schools. One assister described another as "The assisters' Assister"; when asked to describe what she meant, she said:

> She is thoroughly professional...you know, she has the day down pat, she knows which teachers she is going to see, what they will be discussing; she pulls out that huge notebook and makes notes and appointments; she is right on top of everything.

She characterized herself as working more on the spur of the moment, more informally.

> I'll start talking to the teachers or I'll see something going on in a room and we'll have a small discussion about it, or I'll go in and help the teacher with what's going on in her room.

On another occasion (the Director was not present) one of the assisters, who has a dramatic sense and is talented at creative movement, did improvisations of each assister and his/her mode of work in the school, characterizing one assister as walking into a classroom with great enthusiasm and a loud voice and saying, "I've brought you some science materials which I know you'll love!" or "Now, now, what do we have here?" She mimicked another assister saying in a firm tone to a principal, "No, No, that won't work, while being very dignified." The improvisations had the other assisters rolling with laughter. The point being made here is that assisters appear to have a strong sense of individual style within their common philosophical framework of shared assumptions about children's learning and teacher development.

The independence of the assisters is apparent not only in the schools: at the University Center, all assisters give workshops, based on their expertise and interest. Thus, assisters took major responsibility over the past year for the planning and conducting of the monthly paraprofessional workshops and of the evening workshops for teachers, which go on throughout the year. Assisters make presentations of their work and lead discussions. One assister led a discussion with parents on standardized testing, and

another gave an account of his experience as a staff member at a teacher center in the Southwest.

Finally, it is useful to refer to the document describing the assister's function (see Appendix D) within the framework of the observations made above about assister autonomy. (This document is said to have been "the culmination of much discussion and rethinking about the assister's role." It was reviewed, commented upon and revised by the assisters, and then distributed to principals and district-level officials.) From the description given in this document, it is clear that, despite the Director's strong leadership and predominance, there are many avenues open to the individual assister for the determination of his/her role on a daily basis in the school. Also, it is apparent that assisters seek help from <u>each other</u> and from the Project Director on matters that require delicate negotiation with school administrators and teachers. One assister, who is district-funded, told the Project Director that she was being requested by the District Superintendent to make contact with teachers in a particular school. She also observed that the principal "wants me to go in there and get his teachers to move towards Responsive Education because he doesn't want to take the trouble, and is being pressured by the parents." The Project Director replied,

> Well, tell him about how we work. Tell him that we will be pleased to relate to other teachers but only on the basis of if they are interested in moving in this direction (i.e., child-centered learning). We are not in the business of forcing anyone, even if the principal is interested and the superintendent is interested. He (the principal) probably complained to -- (the superintendent) but the superintendent is not going to call <u>me</u> up and complain to me. He knows the way we work.

A Day in the Life of an Assister

The following is a by-the-clock account containing specific illustrations of how assisters operate in the schools. In order to adequately represent the diversity of Assister Service activities, typical activities are selected from the work of the two NIE-funded assisters.

9:00 A.M. (or a little before): Assister goes to the school office to get the keys to "The Closet"--a tiny storage room toward the back of the school which houses Learning Community curriculum materials, and which also serves as the "lost and found" department between 9:00 and 10:00 A.M. In the office, assister warmly greets and is similarly greeted by Learning Community teachers who are "punching in"; says to one of them, "Don't forget we have a meeting at --" and to another, "Yes, I will try to come by and see if your terrarium is salvageable. Maybe we can take some things out of it to help it to come back."

9:05 A.M.: The senior assister proceeds to "The Closet" where she is met by the apprentice assister (see Page 57 for explanation). They check their respective calendars to see which teachers they have made appointments with for the day and at what times. The senior assister suggests that in addition to the appointments made, that the apprentice or junior assister work for some time in the class of teacher -- "because she needs help developing the social studies thing you started with her," and makes another suggestion, "Spend some time observing in teacher --'s class, and let's talk about it afterwards. I want to know what you think about what is going on there." Senior assister starts some coffee and leaves to keep two five

minute appointments with teachers on the main floor, and to set up further appointments for one-to-one conferences over the week, during the teachers' prep periods.

9:30 A.M.: The senior assister goes to the custodian's office, adjoining the principal's office, to ask him if a third-fourth grade class can tour the basement to see the plumbing system, the generator, etc. The children are studying how buildings differ from those in colonial times. The assister asks the custodian if he would mind explaining to the children how the electrical, the water supply and other systems work.

9:50 A.M.: Assister keeps appointment to do a dissection of a chicken in a fifth-sixth grade classroom, observed by the teacher. The assister has brought with her the appropriate dissection instruments, e.g., scissors, pins, etc. She explains to the children, "You cut the skin away first to expose the flesh, and then you cut through that to observe the circulatory system, the digestive system and the nervous system." The teacher and the assister planned the dissection beforehand. There was also a prior discussion with the children, who, in the course of their study, asked many questions about the internal structure of the human body. The assister leaves and the teacher continues with the lesson.

10:30 A.M.: The assister goes downstairs to another fifth-sixth grade class where the children are making still-lifes and sketching one another. For many days a group of children have been working on perspective, studying and representing objects from different angles, and trying to anticipate what

an object would look like if placed at this angle or that. Assister engages in conversation with two children from this group who are sketching a still-life arrangement placed in the corridor. She suggests that each of the children sketch the object from a different angle and compare their pictures. She asks the children if they can identify from what perspective a picture was sketched by one of their classmates. (She asks them questions based partly on her knowledge of Piagetian studies.)

10:45 A.M.: One of the less experienced teachers comes into "The Closet" to keep his appointment for a brief one-to-one conference. Teacher reports that he had tried the "days of the week" game with some of the children that the assister had suggested and that "it was a great success." Assister is asked by teacher to come into his room "sometime this week" and observe one of the children. "I can't figure out what kind of help she needs from me." Assister and teacher set up a time to do this.

10:50 A.M.: Over cups of coffee, senior and junior assisters compare notes about their progress in making and keeping appointments with teachers. They share the responses of teachers to various suggestions (e.g., "Yeah, she was very interested in the greenhouse idea;" "She had no idea what to do with that big crate, and her children are really turned on to it."). The junior assister says that she has been spending some time in a bilingual class and is "picking up a few Spanish words every day. Of course if you are a beginner the best people to learn from are little kids because they use very simple language."

11:00 A.M.: Senior assister visits teachers in their classrooms to make appointments for individual conferences. She stops off also in the third-fourth grade classroom where the terrarium has lost nearly all its greenery due to a lack of care over the holdiays. Teachers says, "I am very upset. I don't know how it happened because it was fine when we left at the end of school." Assister says, "It may have dried out because it was right next to the radiator." She puts her hand into the glass case and tests the soil for moisture. She says, "We must take out all the dead stuff and see whether the rest will survive." Assister says to me, "I suggested that it would not be a good idea to start a terrarium just before the vacation, but she wanted it so badly. Well, we'll have to see what we can do."

11:30 A.M.: A group of parents and the parent facilitator are cleaning out and stocking the closets in which they store materials for the parent-run corridor. The assister joins them in carrying out cartons, stacking them, and arranging boxes of crayons, while engaging in conversation about the monthly luncheon that parents sponsor to raise money for materials and refreshments for the parent resource room.

11:45 A.M.: Teachers of a Learning Community are having their weekly meeting. As they eat their lunch, they are joined by one of the University Center assisters, who is knowledgeable about science and mechanics, and who is on a short assignment to the school to a teacher build a loft in her room. The University Center staff person talks about how he spent the morning with the children, who made models of possible loft constructions, and discussed the relative merits of the various designs in terms of sturdiness, type of

materials to be used, economics, and durability. One of the teachers says he has some children in his class who are interested in electricity, "but I don't know too much about it." He and another teacher indicate that they don't understand the concepts of electricity very clearly and ask for a workshop on it for next week. This is agreed upon.

1:00 P.M.: Assister enters a fourth-fifth grade classroom, where, as planned beforehand with the teachers and the children, the assister leads a whole class discussion in preparation for a community walk, which will take them into the neighborhood center, a day-care facility, and a store. The children are going to use tape recorders to interview adults and children in these places. During the meeting, children are encouraged to rehearse asking questions by role playing a shopkeeper, a customer and so on. Assister leads session with teacher offering suggestions. Children leave school building in company of the teacher, the assister, and a paraprofessional. Assister's group of children walk past a burned-out house. An Hispanic child, who is to be the interviewer of the storekeeper of a bodega during their visit there, remarks as he passes the house, "Oh, I used to live here but the house got burned up." Assister, showing great interest, draws the child out about the experience. She suggests, "We should write it up when we go back to class." "Were you scared when it happened?" "How old were you?" and so forth. Children visit the day-care center. Some of the children exclaim over the infants. One observes, "This one doesn't talk, but he can walk." Or "This one is big, but he doesn't have any teeth." At the neighborhood center they interviewed the director

One child asks, "Will you be closed down?" and again, "Do kids like to come here?" Children return to their class after an hour, accompanied by the adults.

2:00 P.M.: Back in class, there is a discussion about what they have seen. Again, the assister leads discussion with the teacher helping. Together they make suggestions about projects that the children might engage in as a result of the trip--a story, a picture, a map. They talk about another trip, this time north of the school rather than south. Children get ready to go home. Assister laughingly observes to me:

> Did you notice how ___ and ___ (two Hispanic children) played their role of storekeeper and customer, how comfortable they were? They felt very important. We must do more of that kind of thing. The monolingual children were a little startled because suddenly ___ and ___ became the experts.

2:45 P.M.: The assister talks briefly with the principal in his office, who requested the meeting as they passed each other in the hallway. The conversation is reported to be about a particular teacher who has been placed in a kindergarten classroom after having taught first graders for about ten years. The assister also explains to the principal about the plans for the mural painting project in which teachers have expressed interest, how classes are to be staggered, and other matters. (The meeting between the assister and the principal was not observed by me and this account is based on my conversations with the assister and the principal.)

3:30 P.M.: Two assisters leave their respective schools to go up to the University Center where they are scheduled to have a meeting with the EVR staff, with whom they are collaborating on a study of the varied approaches

that children use to accomplish reading. During the two-hour discussion, the assisters offer suggestions for questions to be included in the study, based on their knowledge of children's development. They suggest reading materials for inclusion in the study. The assisters are serving as observers of children's reading processes as part of the study. This meeting is the first of six meetings to be conducted at the various points of the study, and includes assisters in other Open Education Projects in New York City and Philadelphia.

6:00 P.M.: I join one of the assisters and the Director of the Program for dinner. The main point of their discussion is the various strategies that children use to decipher and comprehend written language. The assister and Director draw upon their observations and experiences of children with whom they have worked. The Assister and Director focus on "the complexity and versatility of children's processes and comprehension."

As stated, the composite day that is presented mainly draws upon weekly, all-day observations of the two NIE assisters as well as of other assisters in their respective schools and at the University Center. Based on the above description, some observations may be made here of their activities that point to their efforts at developing the skills of teachers. First, the one-to-one meetings with teachers, as well as the small group (i.e., the Learning Community) meetings, are apparently a strategy to meet the needs of teachers as individuals as well as members of a cohesive unit. Their brief classroom visits and talks over lunch or during a prep period are undertaken in order to re-establish contact, identify teacher needs ("I need you to give me some ideas about doing planting with the children," or

"Do you have a book on making paper constructions? Two girls are really into that.") and offer ideas that presumably develop the teachers' skills in curriculum development and ability to note children's interests. The weekly Learning Community meetings are mainly to discuss events and plans that involve all the classes in the Community, e.g., planning a trip of the Learning Community to the Museum of Natural History to look at the dinosaurs, a workshop on making math games, a general discussion about how the week has progressed. Thus, both in the individual and in the small group meetings, the objective is to strengthen the skills of teachers for the job of teaching. Another method of developing the skills and strengths of teachers by assisters, described above in the composite day, is "modeling" and demonstrating the role of teacher. The ability to model for the teacher is based upon the assister's own experience as a teacher and upon the assister's reflection upon her role, as a teacher, in her present job as an assister.

> One of the things about being an assister is that you're constantly reliving your own experience and standing back and thinking about its pertinence--you're acquiring distance not just in terms of looking at the teacher's work but also some distance in looking at <u>your</u> own work. You're standing and looking at your teaching career as you look at other teachers as <u>they</u> work. (Project's Founder-Director)

> You see a teacher do something and your own teaching flashes before you. You realize you could have done something better. That can be painful. (an NIE-funded assister)

The Apprenticeship System

Another feature of the organizational structure of the Project is the concept of apprenticeships, mentioned above. Assisters who are new to their roles serve in an apprentice relationship with more experienced assisters. They learn their role through observation of these more seasoned assisters and through discussions with them. Because these apprenticeships are undertaken in a school setting, the apprentices have the opportunity to try out what they have learned by working directly with teachers. Assisters are often assigned in pairs to "cover" a school, so the apprentice relationship is usually a one-to-one relationship. Thus, the junior assister is supported through the learning process by the senior assister. Apparently, this makes for close relationships based on interdependence and mutual support, both on a personal and a professional level. An assister will remark, "I am worried about her--she is under a lot of pressure. We had a very long talk last night about how things are going." Or, "Because we are in separate schools now we don't have that much time to really talk, so we went out after the workshop and had a couple of drinks and had a long talk." The apprenticeship relationship is not carried out with only one assister. Instead, the new assister ". . .is assigned to another school and another assister to experience a different style and also a different school setting." An apprenticeship is not for a fixed period of time, nor is there a rigid separation between apprenticing and real work. At the time that the assister is in training, she/he is also having considerable opportunities to work independently and make decisions, but with the assurance of support from the senior assister. (These observations are based on watching two assisters work in apprentice relationships under the guidance of two experienced assisters in two separate schools.)

In summation, it may be stated that the support structure for the Open Education Project is characterized by a 1) cohesive philosophy and strategy; 2) a unifying purpose; 3) strong centralized leadership based on professional expertise; 4) interchangeability and varied ability of assisters; 5) apprenticeship of assisters; and 6) autonomy of assisters in the schools in which they work.

Relationship of the Project to the University

The Project's affiliation with Central University of New York, the origins of this association, and an examination of features of the present relationship, offer some clues about the Project's efforts to initiate change in the schools and to sustain the capacity for problem-solving which has been initiated in Project schools.

The Project is physically located within Central University in Peirce Hall, which is on the campus in Upper Hattville. The Director of the Project is a Professor of Education with the Department of Elementary Education. In tracing the sequence of events that led to the establishment of the Project with CU, it may be noted that the Project's Director, Professor Lillian Weber, was a member of the faculty and apparently had some reputation as a leading authority in Education before the Project was conceived. The Open Education Project was conceived of and implemented by Professor Weber. She was also the earliest assister in what has now become known as the Assisters' Service.

The Project was not the undertaking of the University or one of its Departments, but was the idea of an individual working within its structure. Nevertheless, the idea for working in the schools in this

style was cleared with the head of the Elementary Education Department; the Dean of the School of Education and the Superintendent of the District. Thus, the project was at all times in the University, a recognized part of the Director's work as faculty member even before the Center was established. This would set it apart from other programs which are university experiments in the community. It was not a package that was being tested or delivered to the community. It was not created in a laboratory situation and then applied to the school situation. From its beginnings, the Project had its existence in an inner-city public school, School I in Upper Hattville, which is a ghetto area.

The establishment of the Center represented a still further institutionalization after more than four years of existence in the public schools of New York City, during which the Advisory Service was developed and funded. The University Center was apparently created as a support base for the change effort because the Assisters' Service, which had already been initiated in the schools, was receiving assurances from some sections of particular schools that this effort would be welcomed by the schools. The Project Director said in this connection, "The Learning Community was never an if, an abstraction. It was a real, living thing in the public schools of New York City before we developed an organization to support it." The organizational link to the university was preceded by concrete practice in a public school setting.

The Project's relationship to the University appears to extend and increase its impact upon persons and institutions interacting with

the public elementary schools of the city. But it is necessary to note the nature of the University with which this Project is linked. Central University of New York has (until this year of fiscal crisis) a 124 year history of providing free higher education to the residents of New York City. The decision in 1971 to adopt Open Enrollment of students, brought into the university students who were otherwise denied an opportunity for higher education either because of lack of money, or because their needs had not been met by the system of public education. The point being made here is that Central University of New York is not like other institutions of higher education in this city. Central's population is predominantly white ethnic, Black and Hispanic, residents of the city who have received their education in the public school system of the city.

The students who attend its School of Elementary Education, like students of other Central departments, are predominantly minority students from the lower income group. These are students who are preparing for careers as teachers or administrators, not in private schools in the city or in the suburbs, but in the public school system in which they received their own education.

The Project, by its affiliation with the university and by virtue of the Project Director's position within the faculty, appears to be in a strong position to influence this student population. Thus, the Project is able to have an impact upon the pre-service and inservice training of potential and practicing public school teachers through courses, workshops, and seminars. This is achieved because Professor Weber, as well as faculty members trained by her, teach regular

courses. The Open Education Project has had an impact on curriculum offerings by the University. For example, "The Child in the Individualized Curriculum" is a choice for students working towards a Master's Degree. The University Center's three-week Summer Institute is also offered for credit towards this degree. I talked to numbers of teachers who were drawn into Open Education as a result of "having taken a child development course or a Piaget course with Weber or one of her associates on the faculty." The University Center over the years appears to have adopted a deliberate strategy of developing more and more links with other departments of the university. Almost all the students in elementary education use the Center as a resource and have some experiences scheduled at the Center. A calendar of University Center use testifies to the fact that various professors on the faculty of the Department of Education use the Center regularly for lectures, workshops and demonstrations. There have been linkages with the Department of Architecture and all other departments in the School of Education. One evening, I observed a Professor in Special Education Department, who was working on the construction of a reading game for use with the students. From a conversation with him it became clear that he had not considered the possibilities of using a certain piece of material in a variety of curriculum areas. Two assisters came over, offering suggestions and asking him questions. At the end, he turned to me and said, "No kidding, <u>that</u> was a turn on." There is added significance in this event in that the Learning Disabilities people are seen as adhering too rigidly to what the Project Director refers to as a "deficit theory" about children's learning.

Individuals from other parts of the College, e.g., Architecture, Puerto Rico studies, Black Studies, Physics, English, etc. have related to the Center.

Because of the Project's relationship with the university, it is in a position to draw upon university resources to support its efforts in the schools. University personnel are assigned to serve as staff in the University Center and occasionally to serve as consultants in Learning Community schools. There are currently three such persons. The Director is assigned to the Center for 1/2 of her time. Conversely, persons who were outside the university framework have been absorbed as university personnel as a result of training with the Project. One such example is former assister Mary Forbes, who is now a full-time faculty member of Central, serving as the Coordinator of all student teaching placements. This particular position would again reinforce the influence of the Project upon the students of the university, as most of these students are placed in Learning Community schools, assuring the schools of additional personnel as a result. A second university resource is some funds. In recognition of class use part of the budget of Elementary Education for materials is funded to the Center. In addition to released time for staff maintenance, office furniture and security services are provided. The University Center with adjoining offices for the Director, editorial staff and clerical staff is physically located within the University. As a faculty member, the Director has an office which provides additional documentation office space. In the proposed new construction (which has been halted as a result of the fiscal crisis) the Project is assured an even larger space.

74

The relationship of the Project to the university carries with it connotations of status and prestige. Project staff members are referred to by school personnel as "Central University Assisters". The Project Director, in a chance meeting with the Superintendent of Schools of District R (the school district in which the Learning Communities schools are concentrated), was greeted with, "Everybody knows you, Professor Weber." The Project itself recently received a recent citation from the American Federation of Colleges of Education as "an outstanding example of a teacher training program."

In summary, it may be stated that the Project appears to have utilized both the resources of the university and its own position within the university to enter into the public schools and subsequently to have a continuing impact upon the preparation of its students for teaching and administrative roles in the City's schools. This influence appears to have grown from a small base, in which the Project Director attempted to influence the educational practice of a small group of student teachers assigned to her, to the present situation in which several thousand student teachers and practicing teachers (roughly 5,000 a year use the University Center) have been exposed to the Assisters' Service, the University Center and their work at Central University.

The Children in the Open Education Project

In this section, the purpose is to describe and analyze the Project's views about children and its actions in regard to children. I will attempt to do this by organizing the observations and analysis into two major sections:

1. Narrative - descriptive account of activities observed in the Learning Communities in various schools.
2. Analysis of roles and structures directly or indirectly related to the Project's philosophy about children.

Narrative - Descriptive Account of Learning Communities

In the two most "developed" schools in which observations were undertaken (see Chapter II: The Schools and the Community), children are in classrooms which are vertically grouped with two or more age-levels represented in each classroom. Groups of between four and six classrooms are designed as Learning Communities. They are variously known as Learning Community 2nd floor, Learning Community 3rd floor, or by their precise location in a school building, e.g., Learning Community 3 NW (3rd floor North West).

In both schools, children's work is displayed in corridors and in classrooms. Some of this work is the product of several hours or sometimes even weeks of collaborative effort among children of a Learning Community or even several Learning Communities. Individual and small group art work, displays of math, and creative writing projects appear to be important aspects of the "environment" of Learning Community Programs in schools.

In the classrooms themselves the movement of children throughout the room, as they explore various materials and complete various activities, is evident. Children may be working together, or individually. An excerpt from my field notes is offered here:

> Perhaps because the classrooms are decentralized and all attention is not focused on the teacher, it is easier for visitors like myself to have access to the children and the room. Children engage you in conversation as you walk around the room looking at the displays of their work or examining the assignments that the teacher has prepared. Some want to know what you do, where you are from or whether you can help them work out a math problem or spell a word. Some children pay no direct attention --all are used to having adults other than their own teacher come into the room to work on projects with them or accompany them on field trips. A parent

comes in on a regular basis, once a week, to crochet with interested children. The teacher has invited a museum resource person to talk about some films the children will see before an upcoming visit to the dinosaur section. Children from one class are the audience for a musical put on by children of another class in their Learning Community. An account of my own exchange with children in one of these classes follows (with emphasis added).

I: Well, I would like you to do a picture for me of the class. I don't have to have it in exact scale, but as close as you can manage. Try to show the different areas and what they are used for. Do it as you think it looks, not as it should be.

1st child:
Well, in the floor plan I did last year, I did mostly everything in scale.

2nd child:
Do you want all the levels of the room to be shown, or just the floor level?

I: No, I would like all the levels because that is what makes this room so interesting.

2nd child:
What do you want it for? Are you from the Central Board?

The budget cuts have produced a rather unfavorable impression among students about the Central Board of Education. I hastened to clarify that it was for a group in Washington.

1st child:
When do you want it? If we work all day today we could finish it today.

I said I didn't want to interfere with their other work.

2nd child:
I have to leave early today.

1st child:
Lets get -- (another child) in on this. If you're not going to be here we won't be able to finish it.

In addition to being used for the display of the children's work and information notices (e.g., "We are working on polyhedrons, plea visit"), the corridors are the locations of much activity. The corridor was envisaged by the Project Director as a "pipeline of

communication" and as a space for the overflow of activity in the individual classrooms. One day, I saw four little girls huddled on the floor, whispering to each other. When I asked what they were doing, they said they were rehearsing a song to present to their class. A student teacher, parent, or community volunteer may be observed sitting at a little table with a child, helping him or her with a math concept or maybe talking with a child about some particular concern. Parents in one school work in the corridor on integrated curriculum activities, involving math, language, and art, for over an hour every morning. Large equipment such as a woodworking table, is sometimes placed in the corridor for community use. Visits by children to one another's classroom is also frequent. (See section on "Community".) On one occasion, parents organized a "strolling minstrels" group among themselves and visited corridors to sing spirituals and folk songs, one parent providing accompaniment on the guitar. Children joined them on their rounds throughout the school. "Corridor Sings" and "Corridor Feasts" (during which parents cook and serve food to children, parents and teachers) are a feature of some Learning Communities. The corridor spaces especially come in handy when children are doing large group projects, such as a mural about their neighborhood, involving scale drawings of city blocks, as well as descriptions of stores, apartment buildings, and other structures. Perhaps the culmination of this type of collaborative activity was achieved when children, teachers, principals, parents, Open Education staff, and artists created large-scale murals in three Learning Community schools, during the period in which this study was in progress.

78

Analysis of Roles and Structures in Terms of the Project's Philosophy About Children

Several roles and structures, which have been initiated in the past, were maintained during my period of observation of the Learning Community Program in the schools. The basic unit of reorganization is the classroom itself, which is "open", with the teacher as facilitator and observer of children's learning and development. Classrooms are grouped together, depending upon the teachers' willingness and interest in working together, and the attempt is made to represent the grade span K-6 in each Learning Community. These classroom groupings are actually the Learning Communities. The consent of the principal is sought for the assignment of volunteering teachers to Learning Communities; these assignments are revised, depending upon discussions between the assister, the teachers, the parents, and the principal.

Thus, the open classrooms and the Learning Communities are implementations that appear to be congruent with the Open Education Project's view of the child as active and interactive, as learning from peer-age and cross-age interactions. In addition to these structural arrangements is the conception of the parents as being a vital part of the children's school-based experiences. (The preceding section mentioned the wide range of parent involvement in the daily curriculum and social life of children. For an elaboration of the parent role, see Chapter V.) Finally, the conception of the assister as providing direct and regular classroom assistance to teachers, as well as school-wide facilitation, reveals a strong connection between the Project's aspirations, beliefs and projections on behalf of children, and the actions necessary to realize them.

There are several important effects or results of the Open Education Project's work, which have an impact on the lives of children. Again, one notices the congruence between the Project's stated goals for children's learning, the strategies undertaken to achieve these goals, and the effects or results of the Project's deliberation and action. Children speak to and work with each other and with numerous adults. They visit each other's classrooms, singly, in pairs or in groups, and report on what they observed during their visits to their own "home" classrooms. Parents and other adults have been observed working with the children in the individual classrooms and in the corridors. Thus, there is much behavioral evidence of interactive, experiential learning on the part of children, of their relations to an adult world, and of their use of the community.

CHAPTER IV: THE BUILDING OF A "NEW" PROFESSIONALISM AMONG TEACHERS

ABSTRACT

A continuing feature of the Open Education Project's activity in the schools in which it works, is the direct and daily interaction of Project staff with teachers. The following observations have been made as a result of studying this aspect of the Project's work:

a) Project staff works directly with groups of teachers and with individual teachers to generate curriculum based on teachers' and children's interests, to encourage learning by doing for both teachers and children, to encourage teachers to work together in the Learning Communities that have been set up, and to help teachers to involve parents in their classrooms and in the corridors. In fact, the largest proportion of assister time, both in the schools and at the University Center, is spent in direct assistance to teachers.

b) The Open Education Project has established organizational structures at several stages of teacher development: the Learning Community, and the formal and informal discussions therein; the Experienced Teachers' Meetings; the system of direct, in-school support in the person of the assister; the development of experienced teachers as assisters to provide leadership to other teachers in Learning Communities; the annual three-week summer institutes for teachers given by the University Center; and the University Center itself, which serves as a resource facility to approximately 5,000 teachers each year and offers seminars with external groups, such as the Vermont School Service Programs, a group interested in documentation of children's development.

c) The Project's efforts are directed at increasing teachers' knowledge of children's cognitive and affective development and potential, and at creating an awareness among teachers, of themselves as a competent community of peers.

THE BUILDING OF A "NEW" PROFESSIONALISM AMONG TEACHERS

In this chapter, the writer draws upon observations of the Project's work with teachers. In particular, the development of experienced teachers--an aspect of the NIE funding--is examined.

> The teacher is an adult, functioning not only in a classroom with children but as a citizen within the institution with an obligation to comment on and contribute to its function. It is within this context that the teacher seeks to give meaning to compulsory education, with her commitment to educability, to potentiality, to the positive connotation of differences. (Director, Notes*, Summer 1974)
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> ***
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> We are committed to the growth of each teacher so long as she remains committed to the necessary efforts for change, based on (assister)-teacher consultation and group evaluation. Teachers who find they are not and cannot be so constantly involved are helped to leave the program. (Director, Notes, December 1972; emphasis added)
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> ***
>
> One should intervene on the level of the teacher's strengths. (Assister, Notes, Fall 1975)
>
> ***
>
> There is a kind of support that only an (assister) can give you. A person that I could go to with my failure and say, "Hey, I'm hurting, the whole thing is too much for me. I can't even go in tomorrow." And she reminded me of all the good things I had done in the past year as a teacher. We worked together on a whole new strategy for the class -- simple things like starting the morning with a sustained quiet reading time rather than with a meeting which was very difficult for many of the kids. Getting me to respond more to the kids than having them respond to me. No supervisor could give you advice like that. (Teacher, in comments to the writer; emphasis added)

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*Notes is a quarterly publication of the Open Education Project. It has subscribers both in this country and overseas.

Staff of the Open Education Project spend the major portion of their time relating to teachers, discussing the work of teachers, reflecting on its own work with teachers, and developing future strategies for improving their work with teachers.

The Open Education Project's central focus is the child. The Project has selected the teacher as its main instrument through which it can ensure optimal experiences for the child. While the Open Education Project works simultaneously with disparate school constituencies, its major objective, as observed by this writer and as explained by the Project's staff members in their conversations and writing, is to create changes in the educational practice of individual teachers and groups of teachers, in order that these changes may be reflected in the teachers' interaction with children. An early statement of purpose bears this out.

> The Learning Community Program would identify the new community, within which each classroom in turn could function as a sub-community, in this way eliminating the isolation of teacher from teacher, class from class and children from one another. Teachers in the Learning Community would begin to organize their rooms so that a child could work independently, or in small groups; they could be guided to provide the materials that would not only reinforce skills but would arouse the child's interest, stimulate his thinking and generate problem solving.

The major objective of working with teachers, in order to create a changed educational setting for children, is operationalized in a number of ways in the Project's relationship to teachers. As earlier stated, the Project's organizational structure is apparently geared towards meeting the needs of teachers at each point in their development. (See Figure V.) A detailed examination of what this work constitutes is made in succeeding pages.

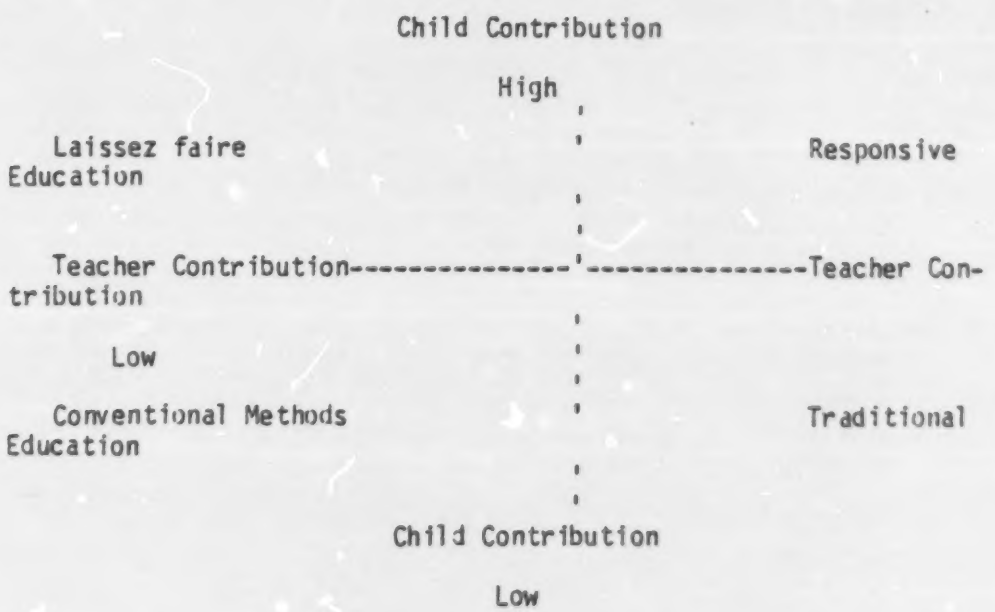
A brief review of the Project's work in the schools since its inception in 1967, as well as a review of observations conducted by this writer over the past year is necessary in order to determine whether the Project was interested in developing the capacity of teachers to maintain educational change in their schools. One important source for making this determination is the Project's own documentation. (See Appendix D.) Another source is the statements and observations collected by me of teachers who are participants in the Project, in informal discussions and in taped conversations, and as they worked in their classrooms. Yet another source is my observations of assister sessions, observations of assisters at work in their schools relating to teachers, and conversations with assisters both informal and taped.

Based on this review, I make the assessment that the Project's concept of voluntary commitment on the part of the teacher and the teacher's espousal of this concept* contains the seed of the notion of teacher self-capacity. By insisting on voluntarism, the Project is insisting on the capacity of individual teachers to make up their own minds about how they would like to teach, how they would like to relate to children, to parents and to each other. By insisting on the capacity of individual teachers to make up their own minds, the Project assumes that teachers are intelligent, self-determined, and interested in their own development. At the risk of stating the obvious, it may be pointed out that some other educational innovations do not necessarily work on this assumption. For example, the exclusively child-centered programs of the 60's negated the importance

*See Chapter VII for a more thorough analysis of this concept as it is applied in the participating schools.

of the teacher as an active agent in a classroom setting. Similarly, the more recent emphasis on educational hardware and computerized learning makes the teacher a mere conveyor belt for pre-programmed learning prepared by an external organization and intended for the child's use. In this connection, the Early Childhood Group of the Educational Testing Service, in trying to identify the differences between major types of educational practice, came up with the following diagram:

FIGURE IV: EDUCATIONAL CLASSIFICATION SCHEME



Based on the extent of active contribution by the individual teacher and the individual child to decisions regarding the content and process of learning. (From Bussis, Chittenden and Amarel, 1976.)

The Project Director observes that the voluntarism of teachers testifies to their autonomy in the educational setting of the Learning Community Program -- whatever the pressures or supports of the school setting, the decision to work voluntarily is ultimately the teacher's own. The notion of the teacher as an active agent is only one part of the Project's characterization of the teacher that is basic to its work of developing self-capacity among teachers. This characterization, this view of the teacher is an important one on which to focus. Teachers are regarded as being capable of making important decisions about their own practice, of being creative and reflective, of being able to benefit from the support of assisters, of being capable of providing support to other teachers and deriving support from them. The Project Director speaks of the "educability of the teacher as being no less than the educability of children." Assisters, in describing their work with teachers, often stress the capability of individual teachers and groups of teachers. Following are two examples:

> She (a teacher) may not have all the skills under her belt, but she has that close way, that warm way with the children. Some of the other teachers don't see that; you know they have been teaching for a long time, and they forget what it is like to begin. (Assister talking informally with this writer about a young teacher who was facing some exclusion by a few other teachers.)

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> --(An assister) however, feels that the main reason for the consolidation of the two Communities in the face of the budget cuts, has been the role taken by the two teacher-assisters. Each of these teachers, over the past two years in their capacity as assisters, related to teachers on a school-wide basis helping them develop their skills as good Open Education teachers. When they returned to their classrooms because of budget cuts, they continued to offer "advisory support to the teachers." (The assister) says this could not have happened if -- and -- (the teacher-assisters) were not real master teachers.

The Learning Community Structure: A Structure to Facilitate Problem Solving

Consistent with the Project's characterization of teachers, are the steps it took from the very beginning, and continues to take, in fostering teacher growth and mutual support. Its strategy for school reorganization, the Learning Community Program, by its very structure appears to have sought to ensure teacher support for one another. By placing teachers who wanted to work together, next to one another, it attempted to draw teachers into relationships of support.*

It would appear that teachers who are participants in the Learning Community Program are able to detect the difference between their present experience and their past experience as "traditional" teachers, and one of the differences that they point to is support that they get from each other as a result of the Community structure.

> I used to be a formal teacher before, and you know in a formal situation teachers come and go, and somehow it isn't the same. But where you are trying to develop something different, where you are trying to develop a continuity for example, as we were trying so hard to do last year, and when they take out parts of it (i.e., through budget cuts), it is disrupting the things that you are building for. You don't have a view of school ending in June but of it continuing in September. Then you have three teachers axed out in one Community, all your building falls down, and you have to start from the beginning again. And its hard to start from the beginning again and again. (Comments to the writer).

The supports experienced as a result of the Community structure appear to take a variety of forms, and teachers identify these different supports in their conversations. One teacher said, "I feel I can walk into this teacher's room when I am feeling low or when I

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*See Chapter VII, Philosophical Concepts and their Relationships to Project Efforts at "School Improvement."

can't make something go well in my room." A statement like this, echoed by other teachers in other words, points to their feeling that they are accessible to one another and not "shut up in their own classrooms with their own problems." The Project Director stresses this accessibility as the most fundamental change from traditional education:

> The bedrock of the Learning Community structure is accessibility. You cannot have the notion of teachers working together unless you first examine the implications of teachers talking with one another about children's learning, helping one another to develop. So first we had to work to create this openness, to develop this openness. Teachers do want to have this kind of sharing of experiences, but our huge depersonalized schools have made this difficult. (Comments to this writer.)

The Learning Community structure may therefore be described as one that facilitates the accessibility, both of teachers and of children, to one another. The accessibility appears to provide the base for other teacher interactions, e.g., teachers say that they share classroom materials, rather than duplicate materials for each room. The Community itself serves this function in a distinctive way. In one of the schools a woodworking area has been set up in the corridor which is then used by children from various classes in the Community. Teachers share materials that they have developed for use in their own classrooms with other teachers in their own Community or in another Community. They share suggestions about class trips, ideas for math and reading games, and other ideas and information. Thus, there is a pooling of resources that is facilitated by the Community structure. The supports experienced by the teachers are both formal and informal. A teacher going into the room of another teacher to talk over a difficulty or to share something of which she is proud, is an example

of an informal use of the Community support structure. Teachers sitting together during a scheduled Community meeting, to discuss concrete, specific ways in which one teacher might support a child who is having difficulty, might be characterized as a formal use of the Community support structure. The Director, however, points to the existence of a "commitment to accessibility to one another" before the informal and formal use of the Community support structure could be possible:

> In the beginning, we asked teachers, "Do you want to share with each other, do you want to work together? What does working together mean?" Before (we instituted) the weekly Community meetings, there was a whole life -- a willingness of teachers to work together and learn from each other. It wasn't a romantic thing. Teachers didn't simply say, "We want to work together." We had to identify their dissatisfaction with the silent classroom, the isolated classroom and then talk about alternative ways of relating to children and to each other. (Speech to teachers by Director during Summer Institute 1976.)

Thus, it appears that the first stage in the Project's relationship to teachers was an engagement of teachers in a reflection upon their experiences as traditional teachers, and a gradual development of an emotional climate that could sustain the organizational structures, i.e., the Learning Community, which came afterwards. The Director similarly points out that the University Center came into existence after more than four years of work in the schools, with the Director and later her first assister-in-training talking with teachers, helping them set up classrooms and discussing children's needs and strengths. Apparently, there is a sense that the creation of structures should be preceded by careful study and

discussion of the problems. In other words, the creation of organizational support structures is dictated by needs expressed through problem identification and problem study, rather than as a substitute for problem study and identification.

The assister-teacher relationship was explored by the writer. When I asked teachers, "Do you feel you have room to grow while the assister is around?" (a question slipped into conversation with teachers, after classroom observations with them), sample responses were:

> Oh yeah. I don't feel she's breathing down my neck. She might come by and if I have a problem I might say, "Listen when you've got a little time, I want to sit down with you." Or she might bring in some suggestions based upon what she has observed in my classsroom, or while she is working with a group of my kids.

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> Sometimes she will suggest something, and I won't see her for a while. Then I have time to think about what she has said. And maybe I'll even try it. I usually try it, because it's usually a good suggestion--not immediately, maybe. And then when she is around again, I'd point it out to her or she'll remark about it and say some nice thing.

Written materials produced over the years testify to the fact that the Project deliberately did not have assisters in the schools every day of the week. That teachers should have the time to reflect on the suggestions made to them, and the time to implement the suggestions in their own ways. Again, this appears to be another illustration of the Project's attempt to build the capacity of teachers to reflect upon and make improvements in their own teaching practice. It would appear further, that this strategy is different from the one occasionally employed by school supervisors who "do their daily rounds to see if

there is order in the school." The emphasis is on trust and belief in the teacher's inherent ability, over time, to discriminate between teaching supportive of children and teaching supportive of the maintenance of routines and procedures of the school as an institution.

A central strategy of the Project's work with developing teacher self-capacity is its facilitation of support structures at various stages in teachers' development. We have already noted that a major function of the University Center is to provide specific help to teachers who are working, usually in isolation, in unsupportive school settings. The help provided at the University Center consists of curriculum suggestions and advice about materials to examine and perhaps introduce in the classroom, e.g., live animals, sand, clay, etc. Its setting invites teachers to come together and derive support from each other and from the assister staff through the exchange of information about their respective school situations and the exchange of suggestions about curriculum ideas, room arrangement ideas, etc. Within the Learning Community structure, specific efforts are made to provide supports for less experienced teachers. An assister may suggest, "Well, you might go into --'s room and observe what her children are doing with graphing," or "Maybe you would like to talk with -- about how she keeps records of children's progress." Experienced teachers relate how they have helped others:

> She (a relatively inexperienced teacher) had been teaching for three years and had not quite gotten things together. I felt that if I went in there, and worked with her and worked with her kids, by role modeling for her, it would help her to develop the curriculum that she hadn't yet begun to fully develop. I think I helped.

Newer, less experienced teachers testify to the sympathetic support that they say the Learning Community structure is capable of providing:

> I chose to be in a different Learning Community every year--I wanted to learn how different teachers work. I've enjoyed that but now I am going to try to stay with this Community for the next two or three years if I can. Last year I was physically part of a Learning Community, but I was excluded; it was a very negative experience. But this year I think it is going to work out pretty well. With the staff cut though and the loss of cluster teachers (it's not just a budget cut, it's an educational cut) you just don't have that much time to sit and observe in another teacher's class. I want to sit and talk with other teachers about reading and math. I think it will happen...Another thing is that the assister is not able to come around so much. --(assister) and I began to talk about the reading for my class. She showed me some ways to establish activities for slow readers, that she had tried. It was very good, and I wanted to talk to her some more. But she hasn't been able to get back to me. I am glad that in our school the Bilingual Program is completely integrated within the school; it's part of the Learning Community Program. Perhaps we could use an assister especially with reading--in the bilingual program you have to teach English as a second language, as a first language and as a foreign language, to meet the needs of the kids. I would not teach in a school that grouped the kids according to ability. (Bilingual teacher, Learning Community Program.)

It appears therefore, that the Learning Community structure is found by its participants; to be supportive of apprenticeship relations between more experienced and less experienced teachers. The apprentice relationship appears to be fostered through subtle means rather than through a formal designation of who is the teacher and who is the one to be taught. Instead, an assister may suggest to a teacher who is looking for specific help, e.g., with teaching computation in her class,

> Well, here are some ideas, but you know, the person you should really ask is --(a teacher). She is a whiz at math and she is really good at coming up with suggestions about number games. I am sure she will let you look at some of the games she has developed.

The assister may go a step further if this teacher is dubious and may approach the experienced teacher and ask her for help. This technique has been observed to be utilized a number of times. The fact of proximity to one another which is a result of Community grouping further facilitates this informal exchange; a newer teacher, less confident, may need to step only next door for a few minutes for a brief conversation with a more experienced teacher to get some help.

Facilitating the Development of the Experienced Teacher

A sustained feature of the Project, established at its inception and continued throughout the years of its existence, has been to support the teachers who begin in Open Education and help them develop gradually into what the Project Director and her staff often referred to as "experienced teachers." The second stage of this process appears to be the utilization of the experienced teacher in helping the development of newer, less experienced teachers. From reading the Project's own documents, from listening at length to "experienced" teachers' own accounts of their work, from observing "experienced" teachers at work (in classrooms, during Community meetings with other teachers, at the University Center, and at various other events like weekend retreats, the Summer Institutes, and Open Education Parents' meetings) I attempted to define the "experienced teacher." The experienced teacher appears to be an individual teacher who has spent at least five years working with the Open Education Project. "Experience" does not refer so much to the total number of years spent in teaching, but to the years spent in "teaching in an open way."

In addition, it appears that the majority of these teachers have had considerable teaching experience in the public schools before their work as Open Education teachers. The experienced teachers are older, usually in their late thirties to late forties. However, the most basic connotation of the term is awareness of or sensitivity to the needs and the strengths of children. In brief summary, an "experienced" teacher is one who is responsive to the needs of children and has developed, over several years of practice as a Open Education teacher, a complex understanding and appreciation of children's needs. An "experienced" teacher is also able to analyze and reflect upon his/her own teaching process, is able to relate to the needs of other teachers, is conscious of and accepting of the stresses and strains of working in public education, and is appreciative of the rewards as well. The following quotes from taped conversations and discussions involving experienced teachers illustrate the various points contained in the definition given above:

On helping other teachers:

> At the beginning of this year we had teachers placed in Early Childhood grades who had never tuaght there before, teacheers who were used to teachingg fifth grade, or had been in reading positions and so on. They were having an awful lot of trouble. Last year I had become friendly with some of them, but some of them were totally new. I got to school very early in the morning and they would come into my room at a quarter to eight, after I had set up my room, and we would talk. I would give them little ideas about how to set up a classroom, how to plan a day...

Ability to analyze and reflect upon his/her teaching experience:

> I used to be very judgmental about other teachers. A teacher was either good or bad. This or that guy was either open or closed. The demarcation lines were very rigid. But I have grown tremendously. I just have a better sense of time--that people take time to develop.

Awareness of children and their unique needs and strengths:

> Five years ago, I had a first grade class that was terrific at creative writing. I made a lot of activity cards for them. Then this year I had a group of kids. I wanted so badly for them to use the activity cards I had made for the other kids five years ago, when I taught first grade. I had these cards in a huge envelope. But it didn't come out that way. These kids didn't want to use them. Their creativity was expressed orally, in dramatics, etc., instead of in writing.

and again:

> It is important for us as teachers to reflect on how we have grown and changed over the years. But it is equally important for us to help children remember and reflect upon how and in which ways <u>they</u> have grown and changed over a period of time.

On working with parents:

> My whole approach in doing the parent information program last year was based on the confusion that exists in some parents' minds about where they think that an open classroom is a passive Summerhill kind of thing where children can run riot and can do whatever it is they want to do and it's O.K., can act out in antisocial ways and it is O.K. Well, it's not O.K. They know there are standards and there is structure and values.

As stated earlier, the evolution of beginning teachers into Open Education teacherss is seen as a gradual one. An excerpt from the "Continuation Research Proposal" submitted to NIE refers to this gradual development and the underlying rationale:

> We believe that with the institutionalization of the (University Center) (which happened in 1970) at (Central University) as support base and within the supporting structure of the (Learning Community), experienced teachers could work with principals, parents, paraprofessionals and other teachers to provide the rich and nurturing developmental environment vital to children's growth.
>
> This of course could happen only after our highly developed (Learning Community) schools could prove that change is possible within the New York City public schools. It could only happen when experienced teachers, having developed depth of understanding and having expanded their resources, gained the confidence that they were capable not only of maintaining the changes made in their schools but also of stimulating further development of other teachers.

The Experienced Teacher Sessions:

I have referred above to the experienced Teacher meetings at the University Center. These sessions were explicitly used to promote the further development of experienced teachers by joint reflection upon their teaching practice. In these sessions, Teachers offered highly personal accounts about their personal and professional growth.

The meetings took place twice a month after school, at University Center. The format featured one or two experienced teachers reporting upon the past year at each meeting, but also drawing upon their past experiences as teachers and reflecting upon their professional growth. The following excerpts attempt to capture the quality of these exchanges:

> I then began a project that involved other teachers. This was the resource room. We set it up on the third floor and it's--it's just lovely. It involved a lot of work in relating to other teachers. Last year there were some upper grade teachers who had just begun to get involved in (Open Education). They were involved in (PLAY) and they loved the idea of relating art to social studies and other classroom experiences. I took them to see a resource room at School (M). We had some questions from some of these classroom teachers who had not had (Open Education) in their classrooms, and we wanted them to have these experiences in their own classroom first. But they really wanted to have a resource room. I helped them write a proposal and we got $400.00 from the Parents; Association for materials and equipment.
>
> ****
>
> We relied on the parents' strengths; we would always ask, "Is there anything <u>you</u> especially would like to do?" We've had parents come in--two of the fathers love to work with wood, and they would come and do woodworking once a week. Also one of the Spanish parents was a great sewer and she helped the children make samplers, etc.
>
> ****

> We couldn't use the corridor--it was too narrow, and there are some classes that object to the noise and traffic in the corridor, so we used the resource room instead. We wanted children from different classes going there together and working there together. Three classes would use the resource room three times a week, and each would send five, six, children to work in there. We recruited parents--we have very active parents--we planned with them about how they might work in there on <u>their</u> classes' time.

A feature of these sessions, which usually lasted two hours each, was the sharing of the Project staff's own experiences as teachers. The pooling together of teaching experiences and expertise would not be possible if the Project staff were not experienced teachers themselves. This expertise on the part of the Project's own staff invests them with a status and prestige which is based on their professional skills rather than on official title or position. Further, it would seem that other school assistance groups, which do not have teaching and other educational practitioner skills, might not be fully accepted by teachers, if they were merely facilitators of process rather than of content. Excerpted below are examples of the Project staff sharing their experiences as teachers in these Experienced Teacher meetings:

> There's another curriculum at work, that's always a potential in the classroom, and that is that the children are always learning a tremendous amount from each other. I can still recall a white child who came into my class, who had a lot of problems, and everytime something happened he would go around the classroom saying, "Nigger", stuff like that. My other children were unaware of this term. There were six years old, but they would fight back. There were tremendous fights over this racial thing. But this little white child wanted to be with the Black kids. He wanted to be with them but he had alienated them. I can't give you all the subleties of what happend on this. The kids wanted to come together. But it took a long while. It was May and it was <u>late</u>. But they did come together. I knew instantly that it was a great experience for them. That is the other curriculum of Open Education -- children's feelings about one another and the teacher's

> understanding and appreciation of these feelings. They would go into the next class next year and it might not be a racial issue; it might be something else. But what they had learned from each other would benefit each one of them and help them in solving the next problem. (An assister)

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> I'll throw in my own growth as a teacher. The time that I really felt I was learning something, perceived something new, was when I was working with some quite troubled ones in the midst of many others who were not. When I figured out -- (and it took time) but when I figured out how to get <u>that</u> troubled kid going, I was so marvelously better with everybody, that the gain was enormous for everyone. I saw that again and again. (Project Director)

The Experienced Teacher evening sessions, with usually about eight to ten teachers at each meeting, as well as Project staff, were initiated by the Project when the school year was well under way and when the school situations had stabilized after the transfers and layoffs that resulted from the budget cuts. The timing showed empathy for the teachers' situation but it also indicated another rationale: in the midst of a difficult school year it was especially important to draw attention to the ways in which experienced teachers, because of their professional maturity, were coping in their classrooms and their schools. It apparently helped to mirror the teachers to themselves during a period of low morale, so that their growth could help them address difficult school settings.

> We need to meet like this you know. Sometimes you get so caught up in your own problems it is hard to stand back and review how it is for other people. You forget that you have strengths. (Experienced Teacher)

The Experienced Teacher sessions are one example of the Project's focus on providing a forum for teachers as a means towards their further development and towards the fostering of community among them; the Community structure, mentioned earlier, is another. Other examples have been observed

over the past year of teachers being brought together. One might even go so far as to say that a facilitative structure is set up at each stage of the teacher's development to encourage further growth. The following quote summarizes the Project's view of teacher development:

> Our basic commitment is to further the continuity of children's development, of which the continuity of teachers' development is an essential concomitant. Ours therefore is a double commitment...in both our schools and in our supports for teacher development, we have sought for minimal, simple structures that will derive stability from the accrual to those who work with them. Thus, in the schools we hope that increasingly, the teacher communities will support each other, that schools and districts will facilitate teacher development, move further toward a view of advisement instead of supervision and accept the commitment even financially for such support...(From and article by (Lillian Weber and Sara Samson in "Ideas", published 1973; emphasis added.)

It is useful to organize the Project's work in relationship to teachers into four major categories: (1) developing teachers' understanding about children, (2) developing teachers' skills, (3) developing organizational support structures for continued teacher development, (4) developing teachers' professional self-concept.

The Experienced Teacher Becomes an Assister to other Teachers

It has been noted that the building of teachers' capacity for self-improvement appears to have been a central part of the Project's earliest goals in its work with teachers. Statements have been included above from teachers that substantiate this point. Further, it may be noted that the Project implemented specific measures to develop experienced teachers into teacher-assisters, to serve in an advisory capacity to teachers in their schools. The point being made here is only that the notion of building

school self-capacity through teacher development existed several years before NIE funding was available. An excerpt from the Continuation Research Proposal to NIE makes brief reference to this plan for training:

> We used a grant from the Chancellor's Fund of the Board of Education of the City of New York to fund three teacher positions for four experienced (Learning Community) teachers to become trainees with (Central University's Assisters' Service) for the school year 1973-74...These four teachers received training in (Learning Communities) not in their schools, working in two schools at a time and assigned to an experienced assister. They also visited additional schools, attended the Friday Assisters' Training Sessions, and the Assister Weekend conferences...(emphasis added)

In a taped conversation with this writer, one of these experienced teachers reviewed her experience as an assister in training:

> --(the principal) said to me that the Project Director had gotten some money for the training of master teachers to become (assisters) and would I be interested. Anyway, (another teacher) was also interested and she and I had always worked together and we decided to do it together and we did. She had a 2-3 grade class and we shared that class. I taught in that class two days a week and she taught in that class two days a week and then on Friday we went up to (Central University) together. I also trained at -- (naming Learning Community Schools) and then I went to -- (a school outside the district) and worked with -- (a former assister). It was the most fantastic training I received anywhere, working with experienced (assisters) like -- (naming three), visiting other schools, going up on Fridays (to the University Center) where all kinds of fantastic people came to talk to us and share ideas. You couldn't buy that kind of education anywhere...

The Continuation Research Proposal further states that for the following year, 1974-75, NIE funded two assister positions in order to:

> ...help the experienced teachers who had had (assister) training begin to use this training with teachers in their own schools. The (assister) would also be finding ways to help other experienced teachers begin to assume the role of helping the inexperienced. In this way they would be fostering extension of school capacity for support of (Open Education).

Some specific methods for supporting and utilizing the experienced teachers has been observed. In one school, the NIE funded assister has taken a bystander or interested spectator role, offering behind-the-scene support to the two assisters-in-training who returned to their classrooms at the end of the training period. These two teacher-assisters take on a number of functions that appear to testify to their leadership role in facilitating the development of the teachers and the Learning Communities in their school. Both teacher-assisters run the weekly Community meetings. In preparation, they make contact with teachers in their Learning Community to remind them of the lunchtime meeting. They may ask if any teacher has a special concern that he/she wishes to add to the agenda for the meeting. If a teacher is scheduled to make a presentation of some kind, the teacher-assister asks if the teacher is ready to do this. For example, if a "staffing" meeting is scheduled (description follows later in this chapter) the teacher-assister may ask if the teachers concerned are ready to take on the various assignments that this procedure necessitates. A teacher-assister may conduct a math workshop or a marbilizing paper workshop for teachers during a Community meeting time. Or one of the other teachers in the Learning Community may be requested by the teacher-assister to conduct such a workshop. This is not to say that another teacher in the Learning Community cannot intitate such a request or make suggestions for the subject of Community meetings. The emphasis is on informality and a pleasant coming together of people discussing mutual concerns. One of these experienced teachers-turned-assister describes her role:

> You see the most important thing about being an (assister)(to other teachers) is establishing good human relationships and trust. If you don't have that you don't have anything. Working in a school for a number of years, you establish relationships very naturally, and people know who you are and they know that I am a hard worker who has never sloughed anything off. So my work as an (assister in training) was very easy. This year I am back in my classroom full time, and working to give teachers support and

help them rely on each other, is that much harder. What we have tried to do is come together once a week and we have corridor sings (with the children) and we have (Community) meetings to plan some projects together. It has been slow getting to do this. It has been very slow. Many teachers feel very upset about the fact that some teachers with whom they worked together so closely in the last year are no longer in the school, that the corridor is not the same. They ask themselves, "Is it worth it to try, if you're going to lose it anyway with the next budget cuts?"

To cite another instance of utilization of experienced teachers, one of them was invited by the chairperson of the Learning Community Support Committee (a parent group) to present the Learning Community Program mainly for the benefit of new parents, who expressed interest in such a discussion. A sample dialogue from this meeting follows:

Parent: I am interested to know what you think of using the phonics approach for beginning readers. Some of the research I have read supports the phonics approach. How is that worked in the (Learning Community)?

Teacher: There is no <u>one</u> approach. There are a multiplicity of approaches...You want to build up the child's own language. After the child has made an initial breakthrough in reading, has just broken the code and can tell you "house", "home", "mother", etc.; <u>after</u> that occurs, you can begin to work on the discrete parts of language like initial, consonant, vowels, blends. You don't drill a child on separate words. We believe in building from the child's vocabulary and the words that he/she is interested in and form part of his/her understanding of the world.

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As yet another example of utilization of experienced teachers, one experienced teacher served on the staff during the annual three-week Summer Institute offered by the University Center for practicing teachers in the City and from all over the country. During the Institute, the experienced teacher led discussions requested by newer Open Education teachers (including teachers from other NIE-funded projects and other visiting teachers) on aspects of classroom reorganization, development of integrative curriculum, pooling of resources in a Learning Community, and parent involvement in the classroom.

Again, an assister suggested to one experienced teacher that he work closely with teachers in a particular Learning Community, which had been disrupted by the layoff of two of the more experienced members. This teacher proceeded to invite teachers to his classroom to eat lunch and discuss, on a daily basis, some of the reorganization that had to take place in the wake of the cuts. He was particularly helpful to an older teacher who had been returned to the classroom from an administrative position. While the teacher-assisters assume major responsibility for the coordination and facilitation of the Community meetings as well as the daily interchange among teachers and children, it appears that a specific goal is to develop the skills and draw upon the talents of other teachers in the Learning Community.

The teacher-turned-assister regularly meets with the assisters reviewing their work and their progress with individual teachers. At one such meeting, the teacher-assister described a workshop on math games that she was about to conduct. She named the teachers who had

asked for it and the other teachers who had also expressed interest in attending the session. She reported on the efforts she was making to help one Community teacher begin to relate once again to his Learning Community in the aftermath of budget cuts which resulted in the transfer out of the school of several of his closest colleagues. The assister listened, offering suggestions like, "Well, our leaving him alone has only resulted in his deeper withdrawal. We should try to cope with him 'til we make contact." Congratulating the teacher-assister on the format she had planned for the workshop, particularly the fact that, "You have included some very basic material, because I think that is what will make the teachers most comfortable at this point." At the actual Community meetings, the assister sits in, being called upon by the teacher-assister with, "Well, -- do you have any thoughts on this?" or, "Would you like to add to what I have already said?". Aside from these brief conferences, this writer is aware, as stated earlier, that there is much more communication monthly between assisters and experienced teachers through telephone calls, informal meetings, and over dinner.

Developing Teachers' Understanding About Children.

This is the first, foremost and most pervasive aspect of the Project's work with teachers as with every constituency with which it works. Almost a baseline requirement in all the teachers with whom the Project works is this development of the view of the child as an active, complex individual possessing an inherent ability to make sense of the world. This view is inculcated and fostered among

teachers in numerous ways. Assisters help the teachers to plan a curriculum that "meets children's needs." All classroom strategies are predicated upon their value for children. The very organization of the classroom is based upon the necessity to "provide ffor the varying needs of children and to provide them with a stimulating environment." As stated earlier, in the eyes of Project staff, the hallmark of an experienced teacher is one who has, after many years, developed a complex understanding and heightened appreciation of children's strengths and needs. An "unsatisfactory" teacher (though I have never heard Project staff use this term) is one who has not made sufficient progress towards this view of children or who shows little "respect" for children. The overriding importance attached to this view of children is exemplified in the following description of a group of teachers by an assister:

> Now those four teachers are about as different as you can imagine. They are not above having a lot of differences with each other. But they all share a view of children's learning and that's it. They can have differences but they have this in common.

Teachers' understandings about children are developed in several ways. The teachers' experiences in their own classrooms or their own experiences as parents are shared at the weekly Community meetings and in more informal sessions. These are supplemented by readings in children's development and by attending seminars given by noted authorities, who have been long-time observers of children.

Developing Teachers' Skills

Side by side with the Project's efforts at consciousness-raising about children, is the Project's involvement in developing specific

skills among teachers, that presumably help to make them more competent at their work. Numerous workshops, seminars, discussions, etc. are held around the themes of classroom organization, children's development, and curriculum development. Teachers attend workshops on making math games, science projects, field trips, creative movement, integrating curriculum activities, etc. (see Appendix D for a sample listing of workshops and seminars given at the University Center and in the schools). The objective is to help teachers inccrease their competency in the classroom and to support the development of this competency in a continuous way. This is achieved through frequent workshop sessions and discussions, but most importantly through encouraging teachers to learn from one another. The Project Director discerns a development in teacher skills since the Project began its work with teachers.

> In the early years, we used to have questions about classroom organization like, "Where should I have my reading area?" or, "Where should I have my math area?" "When should I hold my class meeting?" Now the questions are more about the deeper issues of <u>support</u> for all the children, and about <u>how</u> children learn. . .

This appears to be partly borne out by the content of the Experienced Teacher sessions (excerpts of which are available throughout this section). However, it should be noted that the "early" questions -- e.g., questions about classroom organization, etc.--are still being asked by teachers who have been suddenly assigned to Open Education classrooms as a result of the budget cuts (see Chapters I and III). (The implications of the Project's work with teachers in the context of budget cuts, teacher transfers, and teacher layoffs are examined in Chapters III and VIII.) The development of teachers' skills by the

facilitation of competencies in specific areas (e.g., classroom organization, curriculum development) appears to contribute to the improvement of their professional self-concept. A note of confidence is frequently heard when teachers talk about their own work and indicates this growth in professional self-concept.

> Now I am back in the classroom (because of budget cuts) and I am not anxious about it -- I didn't know how I would react but the class is a fine one and I am having the best year of teaching yet. I think it's that way because I was able to pull from what I have learned and from the kinds of reading that I have done in the seminars at the (University Center) and use it the way I was never able to use it before...

Developing Organizational Support Structures for Continued Teacher Development

On this point, it has already been observed that organizational and structural supports appear to be created by the Program to ensure an environment for teacher development. The most important of these supports are the Learning Community, the University Center, the Assisters' Service, and the Experienced Teachers' meetings. The Learning Community, with its promotion of formal and informal interaction, is interpreted as a necessary, or at least highly desirable, condition if teachers and children are to be associated with each other on a daily basis. The University Center was created after it became clear that teachers wanted a place, set apart from the pressures of their schools, where they could come together to exchange ideas and to develop deeper insights into their work through discussion and through investigation of materials. The Assisters' Service provides another support structure, both at the schools and at the University Center. The Experienced Teachers' meetings provide teachers with the opportunity to share and reflect on their experiences at the advanced stage of their professional development.

Developing Teachers' Professional Self-Concept

Finally, a comment may be made about the whole thrust of the Project's work in regard to teachers. Simply stated, the efforts of the Project are directed at the teachers' development of a high level of professional competency--a competency which is recognized by their schools. The success of these efforts may be illustrated. During the recent (and continuing) crisis of teacher layoffs and transfers, parents in all of the Learning Community schools made sustained protests to regain and retain their teachers. In three of these schools, the parents formed a human cordon around their school, day after day, protesting the budget cuts that resulted in teacher cutbacks and cut instructional time. In one school parents prevented excessed teachers from other schools from entering their school to take the place of their own teachers who had been ordered by the Central Board to report to other schools. The parents of these schools were successful in some instances in getting these teachers back. The parents of two schools adopted the policy of getting back all of their teachers before they would accept any new teachers. Similarly, the principals of at least three Learning Community schools requested the return of their teachers over other offered staff. In this situation the principal and parents were familiar with the work of each of the teachers in question, knew of them by name and asked for them to be returned, by name. The point to be made here is that in its program for staff development, the Project has created or is in the process of

creating a cadre of teachers whose work is valued professionally by parents and school administrators. This seems to be a different brand of teacher professionalism than is currently fashionable, which almost exclusively centers on teacher rights to policy making and decision making in general. In the Project's case, the axiom appears to be "knowledge is power", that teachers with highly developed capabilities do hold positions of importance in their schools and do influence policy and decision making.

FIGURE V: A LEARNING COMMUNITY CONTINUUM OF TEACHER DEVELOPMENT

Stages of Development	Projects, Facilitative Structures, Strategies
1. Interested teacher states that she/he would like to "work in an open way" or "relate to children so I can know them better." On-site Learning Community assister tells the teacher that this requires a commitment to making changes over time, to working with other teachers, and to accepting help from an assister.	Assister works side by side with teacher in rearranging classroom into activity areas to "better meet children's needs" and to meet the need of the teacher to respond to children on an individual, small group, or whole class basis. If the school has no on-site assister, the teacher might come to the University Center, where a staff member will discuss classroom rearrangement with her/him, by building or drawing a Learning Community classroom.
2. Teacher experiments with classroom arrangement and with ways to relate to children. Classroom use by children may suggest alterations and additions.	Assister provides assistance within the context of the teacher's present stage of development as opposed to an abstract expectation. Assister models interactions with children and may suggest visits to other classrooms to observe and to talk with other teachers in order to learn about their experiences with classroom reorganization, curriculum development, etc. Teacher attends (rather than participates in) a weekly Learning Community meeting. Teacher also has one-to-one conferences with the assister. Assister visits teacher in class and offers assistance.
3. Teacher develops working relationship with one or two teachers within the Learning Community and increases informal interaction with other teachers. Teacher tries to individualize reading, brings in additional materials to enrich activity areas, and tries to keep records of individual children's progress.	Assister brings in additional resource materials to help teacher develop a rationale for classroom management, e.g., record keeping procedures, use of cooking area, etc. Assister's help, classroom visitations, apprentice relationship with teachers and assister, and Community meetings are continued. Teacher attends Center workshop

Stages of Development (con.)	Projects, Facilitative Structures, Strategies (con.)
	sessions on making math and language games. (Note: assister does not introduce the teacher to "resource books" until the teacher has first experimented.)
4. Teacher undertakes joint curriculum planning with other teachers. Children go on joint field trips, visit each other's classrooms, and work together in the Community.	Assister encourages teacher to report at Community meetings on aspects of her/his classroom. Teacher asks for and receives suggestions for classroom development.
5. Teacher begins to make contributions to the development of student teacher assigned to classroom and is increasingly able to rely on the help of parents and paraprofessionals. Teacher is able to delegate authority and to see these people as collaborators in the child's learning process. Teacher is less insecure about children's choice of acicivties, individual learning styles, and rates of development.	Assister helps teacher with ways to incorporate parents, student teachers, and paraprofessionals into classroom and Community. Assister suggests that teacher talk with another teacher who is sensitive to parents' needs, for example. Assister helps teacher develop more satisfactory ways to report progress of individual children to parents and with greater frequency than was possible with end of term, graded report cards.
6. Teacher offers help to an inexperienced teacher in the Learning Community and also offers her/his special expertise to other teachers. Teacher visits and observes in other Learning Communities in the school.	Community structure offers proximity and supports interaction among teachers and children. Assister suggests that teacher do a workshop (e.g., macrame) for other teachers during a Learning Community meeting.
7. Teacher develops greater skills of observation in classroom and Community. Teacher is able to appreciate the variety of children's abilities and is able to reflect upon and to plan in accordance with children's individual patterns of intellectual and social development.	Teacher participates in a staffing meeting of the Learning Community and reports on a child in her/his class, learning from other teachers' collective perceptions about the particular child. Teacher agrees to try out suggestions for further classroom work with the child.

112

Stages of Development (con.)	Projects, Facilitative Structures, Strategies (con.)
8. Teacher is interested in visiting and observing open education settings in other schools, which she/he has heard about from other teachers. Teacher wants to develop some framework for more insightful study of children.	Assister arranges for the teacher's visits with assisters serving in other schools. Teacher also participates in Vermont School's six-week documentation workshops in Vermont, with which the Project has had a long and close relationship. Open Education teachers from many parts of the country are there.
9. Local teachers colleges ask specifically for student teaching placements in the teacher's classroom and Learning Community.	Teacher attends and participates in Experienced Teacher meetings at the University Center, reflects upon personal and professional growth, and shares complex insights about children.
10. Teacher is invited to serve other teachers as a teacher-assister. Some schools have money to release teachers for training as assisters with the Project.	Teacher-assister visits other schools, joins the Assisters' Service for weekly meetings, participates in individual and small group conferences with the Director and other assisters, attends weekend retreats in Connecticut for long-time "friends and participants" of the Project. These retreats include social and work sessions, communal preparation of food, swimming, etc. followed by morning work sessions on learning styles and on patterns of child and adult development.
11. In spite of full-time return to teaching and in spite of classroom cutbacks, the teacher-assister continues to offer support and leadership for new and struggling teachers, e.g. transferred teachers, teachers whose grade levels have been switched.	Teacher-assister holds workshops, during lunch hour, in math, reading, art, etc.

Stages of development (con.)	Project, Facilitative Structures, Strategies (con.)
12. Teacher-assister is increasingly concerned with maintaining the Learning Community, in the face of budget cuts and teachers' loss of morale at the transfer of their Learning Community colleagues.	Teacher-assister encourages other teachers to return to the Community meetings and asks teachers for agenda suggestions. Assister now assumes the role of interested spectator and occasional contributor, as teacher-assister assumes major responsibility for facilitating Learning Community interaction.

CHAPTER V: PARENTS AND THE OPEN EDUCATION PROJECT

ABSTRACT

From my analysis of historical sources and my conversations with Program participants, I conclude that, in many instances, parents were instrumental in bringing the Learning Community Program into those schools which are the focus of the present study. The following major points are noted about parent participation in the Open Education Project and about the Project's actions in regard to the parents:

a) In working with parents, the Project Staff attempts consciousness raising about educational trends both at the local and national levels, builds specific strengths and skills that parents can use to support the development of the Learning Community Program in the schools, and develops formal and informal structures with which parents might assist the Learning Community Program.

b) Two bilingual parents have taken paid staff positions with the Project under NIE funding, to facilitate the growth of parent participation, particularly Hispanic parent participation. The advantages and drawbacks of these assignments are noted.

c) The Project's strictly for parent participation has the following characteristics: (1) Legitimation, in concrete ways, of parents' expectations about education; (2) Creation of roles and the teaching of skills are closely related to the children's experiences in the Learning Community Program; (3) Collaboration with parents on educational issues; (4) Support for self-definition of their role by parents; (5) Overall approach is to learn from and with parents rather than to educate parents.

d) The involvement of parents in political action, in the classrooms, and in direct and indirect support of the Program is noted.

e) The proliferation of formal and informal structures initiated by, or involving, parents is seen to be largely a result of the Project's strategy of creating an accessible school environment for parents in particular and for other groups in general.

PARENTS AND THE OPEN EDUCATION PROJECT

At the outset, it must be stated that the pattern of parent participation is not identical in each of the Learning Community schools, since each has its own history of development, its own organizational structures, its own relationships of teachers and administrators, and its own perceptions of what specific roles parents can, and should, play in the education and decision-making process in their particular schools. This chapter deals mainly with parent participation as observed in the three Learning Community programs at Schools A, B and D. Observations of parent involvement at the fourth school, School C, are offered, but mainly in passing because the writer did not undertake intensive research at this school. Other schools in which the Program is in effect are referred to, particularly in the context of parent activities during the cuts in staff and instructional time.

The focus of this chapter is on the actions undertaken by the Project in relationship to parents, in order to gain and retain their support for the Learning Community Program. However, it is necessary to provide some background information on the nature of parent involvement in these same schools before the advent of the Learning Community Program. These observations are given to create a balanced picture of the parents' own strengths and initiatives as well as the Project's contribution in building upon and reinforcing these strengths.

Much of the information about the pre-Learning Community involvement of parents has been gained through statements made in informal conversations and in taped interviews with those who are referred to throughout this chapter and elsewhere as "the Veteran Parents." These Veteran Parents have been with the Learning Community since its

its inception and were, in many cases, responsible for introducing the Program in the schools. It appears that prior to the introduction of the Learning Community Program in the schools studied, these parents were involved in the struggle for community control that resulted in the enactment of the decentralization law in the public schools of New York City. From conversations with Veteran Parents we learned that several of them were involved with the newly appointed district officials in meetings that dealt with the implications of decentralization. One Veteran Parent remarked that she and two other parents "had written some of the original decentralization law for our district." Another parent states:

> (the principal) objected strenuously all along the line to parents' rights and parent involvement, that the local school district had mandated. We had taken the initiative since we had wanted these things and asked for them all along. The local school board confirmed that these were our rights and informed the principals that they had to have meetings with parents, had to agree to provide a parents' room, there had to be recognition of parents' involvement and planning in the schools. (emphasis added)

Thus, it appears that these parents, who later became instrumental in bringing Lillian Weber into their school, earlier took the initiative by pushing for their own legitimacy within their children's schools. Another legislative enactment that shaped parent involvement in this district, sought to ensure that individual classrooms, and not merely schools, would be racially integrated. This was the Balanced Class Project. A report by a parent in the Notes states, "that the parents fought to have" this mandate passed by the State Legislature. In addition, a significant event that shaped early involvement of parents in the school was a teachers' strike in 1968. Parents kept the school open and performed the functions of teachers and administrators. This "demystification" of the roles of school personnel affected subsequent participation of these parents in the school.

> ...I think it was the (teachers') strike of 1968 that got me most involved. We kept the school open with half the teachers and about half the students. I think we had about 500. The parents took over the running of the school...We staffed the office and we vowed to make it as good an experience as possible. Some of the parents were licensed teachers so they could take classes. A parent who was an art teacher and a sculptor came in and for the first time there were huge paintings and they hung at eye level for the kids to see their own work.

In pursuance of a suitable educational program as a result of The Balanced Class Project, parents formed committees and held discussions about educational goals for their children. One such committee was the Growth committee set up in School A.

> We established the Growth educational committee, and at one point, two of us drew up a proposal which we mailed to every parent in the school with a tear off sheet with our phone numbers and everything. We set our goals and ideals on paper and sent it home to every parent. Our need was to find a method of education that suited our goals, which we had defined before we had heard of any particular method. (emphasis added)

The leader of the Balanced Class Project approached Lillian Weber as she worked in a Harlem School and took the parent group of School H, another Upper West Side school, to visit her, as she worked in School I and then School C, both ghetto schools in Upper Hattville. Demonstrating the Learning Community approach to her student teachers and those teachers in the schools who wished to cooperate with her. The parents of Schools A, B and D followed H's example and prevailed upon their school administrators to agree to invite Professor Weber to address teachers, parents and administrators. This parents had considereable support at the district level from such high officials as the Director of the Balanced Class Project and the Early Childhood Coordinator.

From the above information, fragmented as it is (and drawn from parents only), it is possible to infer that the parents who continue to be among the most active in the Learning Community Program had, even before the Program began, taken significant steps, largely on their own, to ensure their active participation in their children's schools.* The Responsive Education Project's attempt to build upon this capacity is the subject of the remainder of this chapter.

At the present time, there is evidence of a continuing and expanding relationship between the Project and the parents. At least three major aspects characterize the Project's strategies in regard to parents: (a) Consciousness raising about educational trends both at the local and national level; (b) Building specific strengths and skills for the further development of the Learning Community Program in the schools; (c) The development of informal and formal structures for the verbal and concrete expression of parent attitudes and preferences in relation to school change. These features are not mutually exclusive; each contains elements of the other as will be shown.

Consciousness Raising Among Parents

This usually appears to take place in discussion groups sponsored by the Project at its headquarters, the University Center for Open Education. In the past two years, the major events arranged by the Project, to which parents were especially invited and to which they turned out in large numbers (i.e., about fifty at each meeting) were those that focused on learning disabilities, standardized testing,

*Please consult the following publications for a more thorough treatment of historical and current aspects of parent involvement in the Learning Community Program in District R: Notes, 1971, 1973, 1975; (The Other Side of the Desk), by (Harriet Stone), School B parent.

larger class size, humanizing the lunchroom and playground, and evaluation. The purposes of the Project in involving parents in these discussions appear to be: (1) to present information on these topics, based on the Project Director's or assister's attendance at some national or regional meetings; (2) to present the Project's own rationale for its particular stand on an issue; (3) to hear parents' perceptions on these issues; (4) to suggest possible actions, and to learn from parents what possible actions they might undertake in their schools and on a district-wide basis.

One such session was the Parent-Assister discussion on standardized testing, learning disabilities and parent documentation efforts. A special breakfast was arranged with Project staff contributing food -- coffee, Danish, lox, cream cheese, bagels and fruit. It was attended by "Veteran Parents", some of whom had never been seen before in the University Center or at the schools. Two Central Board officials were present, one of whom had headed the Balanced Class Project when it was being implemented. The Project Director criticized the recent tendency of labeling the majority of children as learning disabled in some way or the other. She suggested that parents be wary of agreeing to receive funds which were available in this area but which carried the drawback of placing labels such as "deficit orientation" upon their children. The Project's position against standardized testing and class placement on the basis of tests in the Early Childhood grades (K-3) was stated in the context of the Project's belief that children's skills have not stabilized at that early age. The Project restated its long-term goal of opposing

standardized testing throughout elementary school. One parent suggested the formation of a Responsive Education committee at the District level to create awareness of the positions taken by the Program. It was suggested to parents that they provide literature on the issues of standardized testing, learning disabilities and other topics of interest to parents in the parent rooms of their respective schools. Veteran Parents of School D were invited to share their efforts at documenting activities at their school. They explained that they had decided to undertake documentation because newer parents "were unfamiliar with the progress the school had already made."

The Project Director suggested the possibility of the parents cooperating with the Project in a documentation of the reactions to the Learning Community Program on the part of parents and children. The parents agreed, and dates were set for a discussion which would be chaired by a Project staff volunteer and held in School D.

The Building of Specific Skills Among Parents

The building of specific skills and strengths among parents is preceded by, or occurs concurrently with, consciousness-raising among them. Reports on the Project's early history point to the fact that workshops geared towards increasing parents' skills in specific areas were undertaken from the beginning. Parents, recalling their involvement with the Project at that time, state that they attended numerous workshops on the use of curriculum, materials, classroom reorganization, math skills and other techniques. Thus, parents learned "how to use the cuisenaire rods and the unifix cubes" and "what Community classrooms look like by helping teachers move furniture and by

arranging learning centers in the classroom." Current examples of the development of parents' skills are the workshops held in the newly created Parent Room at School B, where subjects such as Bookmaking, Printing, Marbelizing, Paper Making, Candy Making and Christmas Ornaments and offered and are well attended. Parents running a Community Program in that school are again receiving inservice support from experienced Learning Community teachers as well as assisters, in developing specific activities for children. Parents who have been involved in documentation activities in the past, and those who are currently involved in the Learning Community Documentation Project mentioned earlier, are developing techniques of interviewing, recording and analysis through discussion among themselves and with Project staff. An excerpt from a meeting dealing with their first attempts at interviewing, illustrates this:

> ---(a parent) says that the problem with the kind of documentation that they are attempting is that the children have been exposed to classrooms run by teachers who themselves are at different stages of professional development. There was therefore a great deal of unevenness in the children's experience of the Learning Community from year to year.
>
> --(Project staff) wonders whether "the North Dakota model may not be a realistic instrument to use." Parent--asks, "What is the North Dakota Model?" --explains that it consists of an interview format using open ended questions to teachers and parents. It also contains "closed" questions, "But I don't think it is as intimate as this project will be."
>
> Parent -- says laughing, "If we don't want standardized testing let's not have standardized questionnaires." Group joins in laughter.
>
> Parent -- says that parents of Junior High School children are not as actively involved in the school and therefore their responses will be harder to get. --says that Junior High teachers use the University Center, and therefore they might be approached for their reactions when they receive children from Learning Community classrooms.

> -- says that the children who had Learning Community experiences are having an impact upon teachers who are slower to change their traditional methods. "There is a certain teacher in the school who is very very traditional. But I have watched her change and adapt to the kids' needs."

Parents skills are also developed at the Saturday Parent-Child Workshops. These morning workshops involve parents and children in such activities as clayworking, creative movement, and waterplay. Attendance at these sessions is quite varied. At one such session, two boys came with their grandmother who is an elevator operator. Several young parents attend regularly with their toddlers and infants. Some of these parents are teachers in the city's schools who attend the University Center regularly during the week and decide to bring their children on the weekend.

The Project's work with paraprofessionals is an example of its attempt to build specific skills among parents. Paraprofessionals are community residents who have children in the local schools. The low wages draw parents, mostly women, from minority groups who have had little success in finding jobs in the commercial world. The University Center has funding from another source to conduct a workshop for paraprofessionals from all the schools in the district, both Community and non-Community schools.

It may be observed that the Project's attempt at skill building and consciousness-raising is not merely in the sense of "let's get parents to discuss these issues," or "let's make them good at math or documentation or music." Rather these efforts are undertaken within

the context of the Project's goals for children. (Since parents recruited the Program in some of these schools, one might assume that the parents' goals for their children are not inconsistent with those of the Project.) Thus, a workshop on bookmaking results in a discussion about what the process means educationally to children, and how it might be extended into a variety of curriculum acitivities. Parents might then introduce this activity in a Learning Community classroom.

Finally, what is most important to state is the substantive emphasis that the Project places upon the contribution of parents to the educational process. Some concrete illustrations serve best. At a workshop for paraprofessionals, and again at one for parents, a film on the young child's acquisition of language through informal interaction with parents, siblings and others was shown. The Project Director and assisters led a discussion, the main point made by them being that parents and the informal environment are basic to the development of children's language capacity; hence, the school's excessive reliance on phonics and pre-programmed approaches is discontinuous with the pre-school learning experience. Funds are made available for parents to attend workshops side by side with assisters, teachers and administrators. Parents are invited to attend social events with principals, university faculty, and teachers. When the Project Director attended a national meeting on standardized testing, she invited a parent and a principal to accompany her. That parents have a unique perspective on children's learning is the basic premise for such Project efforts as encouraging teachers to include information solicited from parents in their observations on children, facilitating parent involvement in classrooms and other areas of the school, and helping parents document their children's experiences in the Learning Community Program.

The Development of Informal and Formal Structures for Parent Participation

Consciousness raising and skill building, discussed above accomplished through the development of informal and formal structures for parent participation. (See Figure VI).

The Bilingual Parent Facilitators. An organizational feature of the Project's relationship with parents under the current funding has been the appointment to its staff of two Hispanic parents. Their appointment and their close collaboration with Project staff, primarily with assisters, appears to be an attempt to develop Hispanic parent participation (though these facilitators relate to all parents) in the Learning Community Program.

This attempt to involve Hispanic parents appears to have had its foundation in earlier efforts to create a broad base of participation and support among all parents. But more specifically, from its early years, the Learning Community Program has absorbed the bilingual programs in the schools in which it operates. Currently, this is especially true in School A and School B which have well-developed bilingual programs and, in addition, have Hispanic parents who have organized themselves into two district wide as well as school-specific communities e.g., the Hispanic Parents Association and the Club de Padres. Past reports of the Program refer to the work of bilingual assisters who were funded to work specifically with teachers and parents of the bilingual program.

The Project had initially submitted a bid to NIE for assister training of paraprofessionals. This would have served the dual purpose of training parents and helping teachers. However,

In speaking at length with these two parents, at the time of their appointment and in subsequent observations of their activities, I could discern no rigid definition of their roles. When asked if they had been told what their functions would be, both answered no. Questioned further, they said they had both been asked to start by observing in classrooms. This was corroborated by remarks made by the Project Director at one of the early meetings of the Assister's Service.

> --(one of these parent facilitators) asked me to give her lots of things to read about curriculum and about children's development and I said, "No way." We want your fresh perspective as you observe in classrooms in your school.

This strategy of involvement through observation and discussion about the specific context and content of children's learning is a tactic that is used consistently with parents, teachers, and school administrators.

It is useful to focus for a moment on this strategy. Both parents, in conversations with this writer, remarked positively about this aspect of their new jobs. One said,

> I used to go into only my child's classroom. And I thought it was the only place that was doing good things. Now I have been in almost every (Learning Community) class in the school and I noticed that there are many different ways of doing something, not just one way. I have a better idea of what the school is like because of this.

The other reflected,

> You know, when you are a "para" you are so close to what you're doing with the children, that you can't step back. This way I can see what the whole classroom looks like to an observer. I know better why something does work or something doesn't work in a class. You also get to know the children in a new way. I've been talking about this point to --(the assister).

Each parent facilitator discussed the result of her observations with the assister who was working in her particular school, and the assister, in turn, added a viewpoint or an observation that she herself had made. For example, when the parent made a remark about a particular teacher's lack of organization, the assister, while agreeing, asked the parent what specific things she noticed which would be examples of disorganization. The parent gave illustrations. The assister reminded the parent that the teacher had only recently returned to the classroom as a result of "excessing" problems. Also she noted that this teacher had shown a marked improvement over the last few years in this area, and that she was very receptive to ideas about running her classroom better. A number of observations may be made about these illustrations, that have significance within the framework of a capacity for school problem-solving. One, that the Project, in exposing parents to the complexities of school change, is developing spokespersons who can articulate this complexity to other parents, visitors, and school officials. The Project is also engaged in narrowing the traditional disparity of perceptions between parents and teachers, of each other's roles, and of their contributions to the learning process of children. In stressing that the teacher is a developing human being, the Project attempts to create a greater sympathy on the part of parents for teachers. Conversely, by encouraging parents to work in classrooms, to come together with teachers and assisters in substantive discussions about children's development, teachers see parents as active participants with valuable perspectives. Further, it may be noted that these exposures of

parents to teachers, and vice versa, are not accomplished within the context of currently fashionable "process sessions", or "encounter" sessions, where the two groups meet and verbalize their difficulties or their hostilities towards each other. The collaboration is achieved through active engagement with and concern for a third element which they both have in common, the children. Such a focus may have the purpose of closing the gap that exists between parents, administrators, and teachers.

Some further observations about the flexibility, with which the parent facilitator roles have been envisaged by the Project, offer illustrations of the Project's strategy of developing the school-related capacities of parents. This flexibility is apparent inasmuch as each of these parents conducts her activities with her own style and preferences.

Parent 1 is a woman in her early forties, who has a long history of involvement in School A, from which her child has just graduated. She is fond of saying, "NIE pays me for only two and half days a week and here I am for seven. I have to be crazy." This parent has been observed to come into the school on weekends to run the mimeograph machine so that some flyers could be ready for distribution on Monday. She is well known by the parents and by teachers and children. Recently, she kept putting off her vacation "because I have to see what happens at this meeting they're going to have." She works in the office doing clerical tasks. She may help set up an exhibit for Puerto Rican Discovery Week. She attends meetings of the school's bilingual parents as well as meetings of the Learning Community Support

Committee and other committees of the Parents' Association. She also meets regularly with the assisters of that school. She has had a long standing relationship of close collaboration with the Hispanic principal of the school. But she is also careful to stress that her relationship with the principal is that of a "parent."

> He is the expert. I just tell it like it is. He may shout but he has to listen. I always call him Mr. --(giving his full name). I say to him, "Mr. --, you better talk to those parents, because they aren't going to stand for that teacher too long." And he says, "But what do you want me to do?" And I say, "You are the principal. I am only telling you what the parents are thinking."

This parent does not always attend regular meetings of the Assisters' Service, presumably because of her long association with the Project's work (she served as a paraprofessional in Learning Community classrooms) and because of her intense activity in all facets of the school from supervising children in the yard at lunch time to serving on district-wide committees. She has been elected to the Community School Board (CSB) on the parent slate and will serve for two years. The CSB is the district level board that went into effect under decentralization, and is composed of parents and community residents.

In contrast, the other facilitator is a younger woman in her late twenties, with three young children; she has fewer years of experience with schools and is new to the Project's work. This younger parent regularly attends meetings with the Assisters' Service. "It's a real opportunity; I want to learn more," she says. The point to note is that the Project acknowledges the previous contributions of both parents, their individual work styles and commitment, and it builds on

these rather than imposing a set agenda for these parents' participation, which does not take into account their past history as well as their personalities and preferences. The Project states in its '74 request for funding to NIE:

> Additional aspects of their role that bring their own and other parents' perspectives to the further development of Open Education will be developed by the parent facilitators themselves...this conception of self-determination is inherent in the growth of self-capacity.

The bilingual parent facilitators have regular informal discussions with assisters while taking a break from working in a classroom, over lunch, while setting up workshop activities in the parents' room, or in scheduled meetings. The parent facilitators bring parents to the University Center for the monthly joint Parent-Assister sessions and for other meetings; they remind paraprofessionals of the monthly workshop held specifically for them; they offer suggestions at assister meetings about which activities draw upon the cultural heritage of paraprofessionals (this produced a re-evaluation of paraprofessional workshop offerings); and they offer suggestions about multicultural curriculum content in Learning Community classrooms. They and the assisters arrange for the luncheons and breakfasts that are held at the schools, to which teachers are also invited (in one school these are held to raise money for the operation of the Parent Room). Parent facilitators were especially active in coordinating (along with the assister) child, teacher, and parent participation in the Project-sponsored mural project, and later in coordinating parents', teachers' and children's activities to make changes in the environment and in the management of the school's lunchroom and playground.

It is difficult to assess the long-term impact of the Project upon parent participation in these schools, when some parents (in this case only these two) are paid and the rest are not. The Project bases its work on voluntary participation, and payment for participation may create difficulties. One of the facilitators spoke of her difficulty with this aspect: "Sometimes they (some other parents) say 'yeh, hey you do this. You're paid.' I don't think they mean it the way it sounds but..." Also, it may be noted that in the past, parent participants, mostly white middle class, were not paid but now minority parent participants are paid. The implication for the Project may not be an entirely healthy one within the context of its premise that it has appeal for all ethnic and socio-economic groups.

The Learning Community Support Committee

This committee was a structure established early in the schools. Its membership is made up of whichever parents desire to attend, including parents who send their children to the traditional program. A parent offers this rationale for the structure:

> One danger in a [parent] committee, particularly in the early years of the developing program, is that it can easily become a watchdog, rather than a support committee. This creates suspicion and distrust between parent and teacher, and can destroy the essential elements of building and planning together that are so necessary. During the past three years at --(name of school) we have tried to keep the (Learning Community) Committee a support committee only, leaving all aspects of the watchdog to the P.A. Education Committee. (A parent writing in the Notes.)

Current meetings of this group have focused, as in previous years, upon such issues as involving newer parents as regular classroom volunteers and as fund raisers. But mainly, the meetings have served to provide a forum for airing parent concerns about specific matters.

In one session, older parents tried to answer a newer parent's concern that she was not "very welcome in her child's (Learning Community) classroom, while she was quite welcome in her other child's traditional classroom." A veteran parent suggested a program for taking younger parents on tours of Learning Community classrooms to familiarize them with what was going on; this suggestion was eagerly accepted by some interested young parents. At another meeting, parents asked questions of an experienced Learning Community teacher, on such subjects as heterogeneous grouping, individualized reading, integrated curriculum and other aspects of teaching in a Learning Community classroom.

Parent-Assister Meetings

Assisters, bilingual parent facilitators and parents who attend the monthly meetings regularly invite other parents. Discussions have focused on issues that affect all the schools in the Program, e.g., larger class size, teacher cutbacks, or issues that are of particular interest in one school. These meetings are open to any parents in the schools and are not limited to parents whose children are in the Learning Community Program. On one occasion, an active Hispanic parent, whose children are in the More Traditional Program at School A, appeared at one of these meetings, and spoke of the difficulties of maintaining continuity of curriculum as children advanced through the grades. The bilingual parent facilitator at this school remarked to me:

> She (the parent) wouldn't believe me when I said that all parents were welcome. She was surprised.

The other bilingual parent facilitator said of some of these meetings:

> I like it when different parents come and discuss all kinds of things. And everybody isn't agreeing. Sometimes it can get boring when just the Project staff meets.

The discussions at these meetings led the parents at School B to undertake a collaborative effort with teachers, children and administrators to reduce the depersonalization and waste in the lunchroom, by creating student bulletin boards, art displays, poetry corners and graffitti walls. Parents sometimes use this forum to make suggestions. One group of parents attended a meeting because they wanted the Project Director to come into the schools, and speak of the goals of the Program to new parents. The Project Director resisted this, saying that the Program had been in the school for a reasonable period of time and that incoming parents would need to define their own participation, based on their experiences with the Program and their interactions with the more experienced parents. (Here I think the implicit suggestion was that these older parents, mostly white, would need to be more sympathetic to different styles and expectations among younger parents, white, Black and Hispanic, and that the Program would be enriched by the exchange among parents of all groups.) These parents also raised the issue that some teachers were not moving fast enough towards creative use of the parent-run resource rooms that parents had set up. The assister in that school and the Project Director were both of the opinion that the teachers needed more time, and that the teachers needed to be more actively involved in the establishment of these rooms and in the plans for their use.

The Lunchroom and Playground Committees

Already mentioned above, these Committees were formed by parents at School B to create better conditions during lunch hour and playtime. The committees worked with custodians, principals, teachers, children, and artists.

Parent Documentation Group

Parents whose children had their elementary schooling within the Learning Community Program got together at the Project's suggestion, with a Project staff volunteer, to interview one another and also to interview parents who are no longer involved in the schools because their children have graduated. Bilingual parent facilitators interviewed bilingual parents. Progress on this was halted, because of parent efforts to boycott the early closing of schools as a result of budget cuts. Interviews are being transcribed, and the parents discussed their attempts at interviewing and analysis in meetings at the University Center. It should be noted that this group was an inter-school group, comprised of parents from three schools. Earlier inter-school collaborative efforts have included visits to Learning Community classrooms.

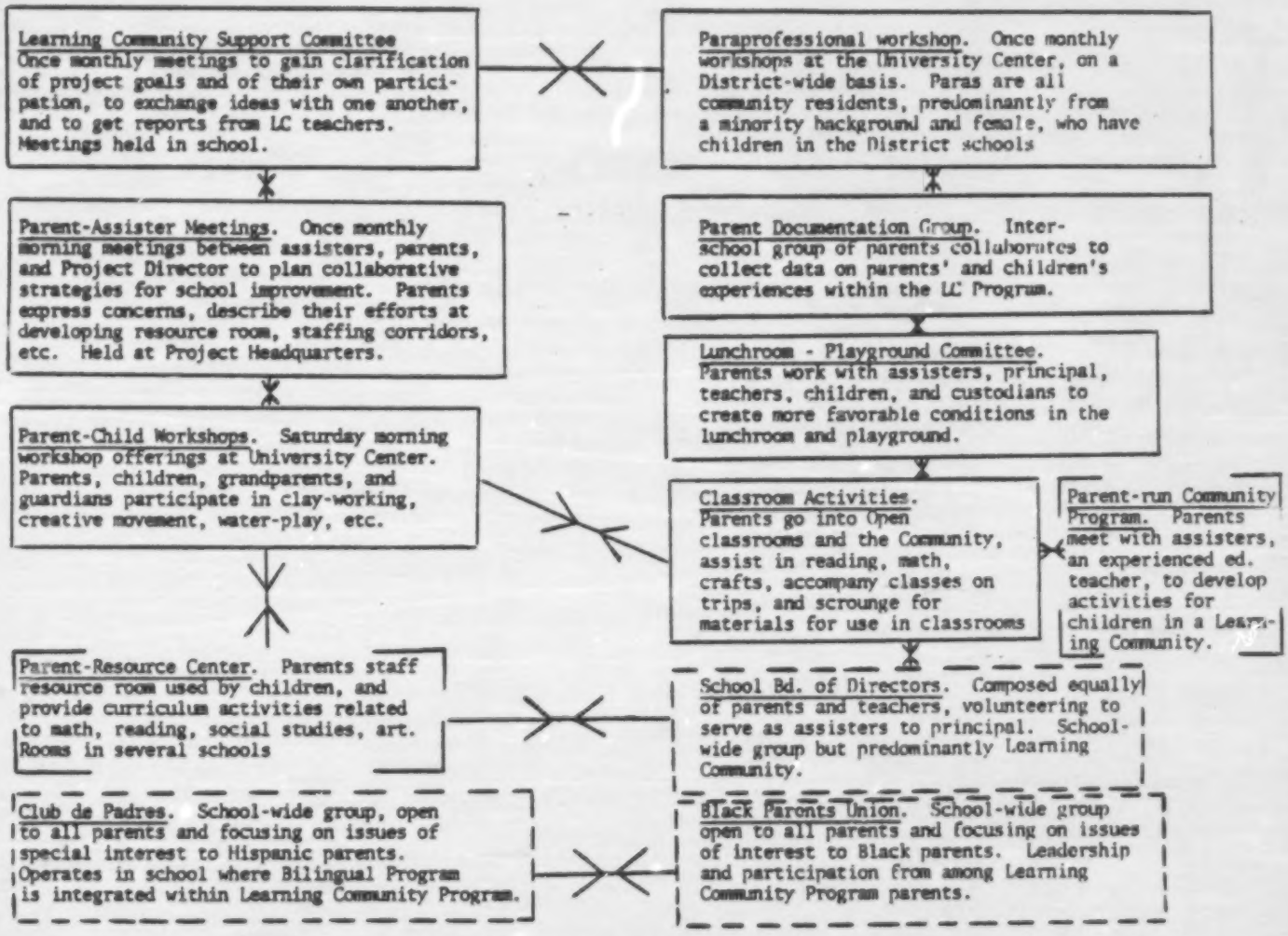
Parent-Run Community Program

Parents in one school decided that they wanted a Community Program for their children which teachers found difficult to provide because of large class size or for other reasons. Parents informed the principal of their intention. The assister offered her services at this point and made arrangements with an experienced Learning Community teacher to help parents plan for activities, and to encourage

parents to bring their own ideas about activities for the children. The bilingual parent facilitator and the assister located additional storage space for materials, joined the parents in the Community Program, and conducted activities with children.

FIGURE VI:

STRUCTURES INVOLVING PARENTS FOR THE DEVELOPMENT AND MAINTENANCE OF THE OPEN EDUCATION PROGRAM


Learning Community Support Committee Once monthly meetings to gain clarification of project goals and of their own participation, to exchange ideas with one another, and to get reports from LC teachers. Meetings held in school.
Paraprofessional workshop. Once monthly workshops at the University Center, on a District-wide basis. Paras are all community residents, predominantly from a minority background and female, who have children in the District schools
Parent-Assister Meetings. Once monthly morning meetings between assisters, parents, and Project Director to plan collaborative strategies for school improvement. Parents express concerns, describe their efforts at developing resource room, staffing corridors, etc. Held at Project Headquarters.
Parent Documentation Group. Inter-school group of parents collaborates to collect data on parents' and children's experiences within the LC Program.
Lunchroom - Playground Committee. Parents work with assisters, principal, teachers, children, and custodians to create more favorable conditions in the lunchroom and playground.
Parent-Child Workshops. Saturday morning workshop offerings at University Center. Parents, children, grandparents, and guardians participate in clay-working, creative movement, water-play, etc.
Classroom Activities. Parents go into Open classrooms and the Community, assist in reading, math, crafts, accompany classes on trips, and scrounge for materials for use in classrooms
Parent-run Community Program. Parents meet with assisters, an experienced ed. teacher, to develop activities for children in a Learning Community.
Parent-Resource Center. Parents staff resource room used by children, and provide curriculum activities related to math, reading, social studies, art. Rooms in several schools
School Bd. of Directors. Composed equally of parents and teachers, volunteering to serve as assisters to principal. School-wide group but predominantly Learning Community.
Club de Padres. School-wide group, open to all parents and focusing on issues of special interest to Hispanic parents. Operates in school where Bilingual Program is integrated within Learning Community Program.
Black Parents Union. School-wide group open to all parents and focusing on issues of interest to Black parents. Leadership and participation from among Learning Community Program parents.
- bold border denote structures initiated by Project
- denote structures initiated by parents or involving parents, assisted and/or refined by assister.
- denote structures either initiated by parents or involving parents, which are thought to have developed because of Learning Community presence.

Parent-Run Resource Room

Initiated by a volunteer teacher who staffed it herself for a year, the parent-run resource room is presently staffed by about twenty parents. The volunteer teacher says there were some problems with getting parents to come on the days they had agreed to come, and to find replacements if they could not make it. She also said parents had taken part-time jobs during the year, and this made it difficult for them to be in school. In an interview with this writer, parents expressed interest in working in the resource room. One young Hispanic parent with a child in kindergarten said,

> No, parents don't have to have special skills in working in school. They should just like to work with children. And the children feel good when they see their parents working here with them and with the other children.

An assister attributed the difficulties encountered by the volunteer teacher to the fact that the idea was one that teachers initiated, which they expected parents to carry out, and parents felt pressured by this.

In sum, I would venture to say that accessibility (of the physical environment of the school to parents) is a prime condition of Learning Community Development and has assisted in the proliferation of roles and structures for parent participation in those schools in which the Program has had a long history of development. Further, this proliferation may provide some indication for a capacity for problem solving among school constituents themselves. The School Board of Directors, composed equally of parents and teachers who volunteer for the positions, is an advisory board to the principal in School B. Though not initiated by the Project, it is a structure for

parent-teacher collaborative decision making, that exists in a predominantly Learning Community school with a principal who strongly supports the Learning Community Program. Similarly, the Club de Padres and the Black Parents Union -- both of whose membership is made up of any parent who wants to attend, but which address issues primarily of interest to these minority groups -- are both in schools in which the bilingual program is integrated within the Learning Community Program, and in which parent participation in both the Club de Padres and the Black Parents Union comes predominatly from the Learning Community parents. The very fact that parents are welcome in the school setting, provides a basis for informal discussion, for collaboration on issues of school interest, for parent input into the school program, and for parent observation of school progress.

I am reminded of a Black male parent who, on three of my visits to one of these schools, was observed to have stationed himself in the hallway just inside the school. I had previously observed him participating at a meeting of the School Board of Directors, where he had made a strong plea for greater safety measures inside and outside the school. When asked what he was doing, he said that he wanted

> to make sure the little kids were going to be all right. Now there's a junior high program in the school. And they could have a little order here and ask the junior high kids to use a separate entrance.

He stopped to instruct a junior high child to "come into the school the other way." He saw three second graders running down the hall and asked them to "walk quietly. Not so much noise." All this was done in a kindly, concerned fashion. He said that he had two little girls, one in a Learning Community classroom, the other in a traditional

classroom: "You know in the Learning Community you have to be a self-starter, and my other one, she needs a little push now and then." The point to be made here is that a parent, even on an individual basis, and because of the accessibility of the school is able to come into his children's school, and was able to express and act upon a particular concern of his.

Summary Analysis of Project Strategies for Building and Reinforcing Parent Capacity for School Problem Solving

We have seen that the history of parent involvement in the schools in which the Project works, certainly in its most "developed" schools, is at least as long as the Project's own history and, in some instances, predates the Learning Community Program itself. It is equally necessary to state that this early involvement by parents has been acknowledged and built upon in specific ways within the context of a program that purports to improve the learning experience for the child. In trying to discern a sequence and a range of efforts undertaken by the Project to develop parent self-capacity, the following have been noted: legitimation, role creation and skill building, collaboration, and self-definition.

Legitimation

The initial stage in the Project's development of parent self-capacity appears to be best illustrated by a quote from a veteran parent recounting early efforts to establish the Program in the school:

> In other words, these crazy ideas that a bunch of people had, were given credence by a bona fide educator who spoke in favor of these things. We (the parents) knew what we wanted, at least vaguely, but we needed somebody else to agree that what we wanted was O.K., that it was the right thing for children, that our feelings as parents were decent feelings. And of course she (the Project Director) could explain very clearly what we needed to do to get this thing going, and convince other people in the schools about it. (emphasis added)

It appears then, that there was first a recognition of the needs and concerns of parents, as opposed to a prescription of what parents should expect and want on behalf of their children. The Project appears to have offered both the legitimation of their persons (see specific examples of participation throughout this chapter) within the learning process in schools, as well as the legitimation for their ideas about education. This point of legitimation, both of persons and ideas, is especially significant within the context of the traditional and continuing non-presence of parents in the public education process. The earliest literature of the Project contains this assertion of legitimation of parents within schools:

> Implicit in our moves towards informal relationships and a better match between a child's way of learning and school structure, was some blurring of the line between home and school, some building of continuities and connections. Nevertheless, the "ground" of parent participation and inclusion remained the school, and the school is the domain of the professional--the teacher. This fact of life certainly accounts for part of the difficulty that parents have, their sense of being outsiders as they look to the teachers for things to do or not to do. It also accounts for their concomitant view that the teacher is an employee whose performance is fair game for criticism...what becomes clear is that even to raise the question about including parents is to mistake the issue, because the informal educative process is one that is inherent in the parent- child, family-child relationship, in the informal association of the ordinary life that exists outside school. The anomaly lay in the fact that parents had been excluded from the educative process, not that parents should be included in this process. (Notes, 1973; emphasis added)

Role Creation and Skill Building

After acknowledging and advocating the presence of parents as essential to the functioning of the Learning Community Program, the Project appears to have outlined specific roles and facilitated the

setting up of support structures for participation. (See descriptions of the Learning Community Support Committee, of the Collaboration between the bilingual parent facilitators and the assister at the schools, of the documentation of Learning Community Community Experiences by parents, etc.) Two examples of skill building for specific use in the classroom follow:

> I don't know how many hours we spent discussing toileting --just trying to understand that children didn't have to do everything as a whole class, that it might even be downright bad for their health. And we used to go to each other's schools and help teachers set up their classrooms. The assisters held cuisenaire workshops and reading workshops. Maybe every parent needs to go through that to really understand what happens in these classrooms. (Veteran parent)

***

> I've already talked about this to -- the assister, and she thinks it is a very good idea. I am going to attend all the curriculum workshops given by -- and -- (experienced teachers) and then I am going to do them with my parents (the parents, mostly Hispanic, at the school). (Bilingual parent facilitator)

Collaboration

Closely related to this strategy of creating self-capacity through role creation, is the Project's strategy of involving parents in a close collaboration on issues. Under role creation, I have pointed to those specific, concrete steps taken by the Project to ensure active parent participation in the schools. Somewhat different from this are the Project's efforts to include parents in a long-term dialogue, which results, in some cases, in collaborative actions. Thus, parents are invited to attend monthly sessions of the Assisters' Service to discuss philosophical and political issues. For example, as pointed out earlier, parents have engaged in discussions about standardized testing at these sessions. Subsequently, parents

accompanied the Project staff to a national meeting in Washington, D.C. on standardized testing. Parents and Project staff are jointly engaged in documenting parent and child reactions to the Learning Community Program. This aspect of collaboration is seen as being on a more strategic and analytical level than the more concrete attempts to involve parents in classrooms.

Self Definition

I would say that this is the most crucial aspect of the Project's relationship to parents, and an essential one in building a long-term association with any school constituents for the purpose of changing and improving the schools. We have noted the feasibility and recognition of individual development in the bilingual parent facilitator role. Simply stated, there is a watching to see what parents want to do, take on their own to do, and this watching presumably serves as the basis for further assistance by the Project to parents.

Review of Project Progress with Parent Participation

It appears that parent participation is strongest in those schools in which parents initially recruited the Learning Community Program for their respective schools. The two major schools in this study are both schools where parents observed the Program as it operated in a ghetto school, and actively recruited it into their schools. In general, this observation and recruitment was done by white, middle-class parents. Since then, the continuance of the Program (and the Program has developed to include more and more classes in the schools

schools over the past eight years) has been helped by the active participation of younger white, Black and Hispanic parents in both these schools. The younger parents were particularly active in the year long struggle to win back teachers and instructional time.

However, one aspect of this participation by active younger parents in these schools has been the apparent lack of awareness among some of them of the Project's historical origins and of its link with the University Center. While teachers are more aware of this connection because of courses taken at Central University and workshop offerings for teachers, younger parents are less likely to be aware of this. This might be an indication of strength within the school setting, namely, an indication that the conditions of accessibility, fostered by the Project through its curriculum venture, have increased connections between teachers and parents, and that the first structures for parent participation, e.g., the Learning Community Support Committee, have resulted in greater parent activity right in the schools. However, this writer feels that the newer parents, in order to have realistic expectations about school change, need to know what has worked in the past, what is difficult to achieve, and what are the strategies that have to be developed to maintain the Program. They would possibly need to know something about the Project's beginnings, the function of its personnel and its Resource Center. For example, it might be useful for parents at the beginning of the school year to receive a flyer, or some other medium of communication, enumerating the goals of the Program, and soliciting suggestions about how they might (with follow-up and progress reports throughout the year)

want to contribute to the Program. There are examples of older parents feeling that there is a lack of knowledge among incoming parents. The Black principal of School C, the Uptown school which has an on-site assister, ascribed the diminishing of the Program in her school to the parents' lack of sufficient information about the goals and specific activities at all stages of the Program. Apparently, in some schools, the interest of parents in the Program has been responsible in large measure for its continuance. However, the Project has not made inroads into the most difficult and depressed schools in the district. It has made inroads into other districts but not into the city as a whole. These are schools where extra efforts have to be made to enable parents to be informed about the goals of the Program before the voluntarism or consenting participation of these parents can be achieved. The Project staff speaks of the need for school people to take professional stands on school issues. For example, they say that it is unfair to place upon parents the burden of reviewing standardized tests and selecting one that meets their approval, as this places the burden of proof upon parents to produce an appropriate test and also presupposes that standardized tests are acceptable to begin with. Similarly, it might be necessary for the Project to assume the burden of presenting its Program for the review of all parents, not merely those parents who already have similar goals for their children, but parents whose life circumstances make it difficult for them to have the leisure to inquire about the workings of the Program, its comparative benefits, etc. If the Program really has benefits for all children, as the Project states, then this should be the first consideration.

CHAPTER VI: THE OPEN EDUCATION PRINCIPAL AS EDUCATIONAL LEADER OF THE SCHOOL COMMUNITY

ABSTRACT

The principals of School A and School B were observed and interviewed for the information provided in this chapter. It is surmised that:

a) The principals: 1) are highly accessible to various school constituents during their working days, and have high visibility and mobility throughout the schools and outside the schools; 2) support the initiatives of teachers and parents; and 3) have a strong identification with the philosophy and practice of the Open Education Project

b) The assister-principal relationship is commented upon. The assister serves as a liaison between teachers and principals and between parents and principals, and provides the non-supervisory staff development that the principal, as evaluator of teachers, is perhaps unable to perform.

c) A collage of observations of the principals at work is presented to provide information on the diverse functions that these principals have. In many instances, the principals selected these functions for themselves, and in other instances, they accepted these functions as a result of participation in the Open Education Project.

THE OPEN EDUCATION PRINCIPAL AS EDUCATIONAL LEADER OF THE SCHOOL COMMUNITY

In this chapter, an attempt is made to describe the roles, personal styles, educational philosophies, and strategies for school improvement of the principals of the two Learning Community schools which are the major focus of this NIE study. However, mention is made of principals in other schools for purposes of contrast and comparison. It is the purpose of this chapter to describe how the principal carries out his duties, especially as these duties relate to his capacity to confront and address the issues and problems of school improvement, maintenance and even survival. An attempt is made to analyze the ways in which the funded Project has developed this capacity to address, confront, and aid in the resolution of school problems. In a few areas, the nature of this assistance is quite clear; in others the connections are not so obvious.

Given this purpose for the chapter, it is necessary to explain the conditions under which data collection pertinent to this chapter was or was not accomplished. First, there were relatively few opportunities to observe the principals at work. In observing teachers or parents, I found that the very fact that there are many individuals who fall into the category of parent or teacher made observation easier and more fruitful. Thus, it was possible to station oneself in the parent's room and, in the course of a morning's observation, see between ten and twenty parents and have conversations with perhaps five or six. Similarly, in the course of a day, it was possible to spend either the entire day observing a teacher at work in her classroom or split the time into shorter observations in three or four classrooms. Because only one individual fills the role of principal

in a school, this person is less accessible for observation in terms of frequency. The other major drawback to the collection of data on the principal's role and function was the effect of the fiscal crisis upon the accessibility of principals for observation. Both principals were in daily consultation with district level officials, parents, teachers, Central Board officials, other principals, the district superintendent, and numerous other individuals, in addition to their routine responsibilities that keep the school going. The fiscal crisis and the activities that were undertaken to counteract its effects placed serious limitations upon data collection about the role of the principal. (This point is made in Appendix A: "How the Study was Done"), but it is appropriate to mention it here because of the special pressures that were placed upon collecting data about principals. Simply stated, it is possible to grab one parent if another is busy and have a brief conversation about the points made at a meeting, but in the event of non-availability on the part of the principal, such information may have to wait weeks, and in the meantime, other issues of greater importance may have surfaced. An additional point that has to be made here about the availability of the principal in the context of the fiscal crisis, is that it was the major objective of parents, during their resistance to budget cuts (which resistance lasted the entire school year) to make the principal unavailable to Central Board officials. This was done to prevent the Central Board of Education from issuing an order of compliance to the principal, who would then be legally bound to carry it through. By being inaccessible to the Central Board, the principal was able to state that he had not received any orders from the Central Board.

Thus, in line with this aim, in one of the schools the principal was ousted from his office and transferred to the custodian's office by parents (with his agreement) and all communication to the principal was screened. In the other school, the acting principal would arrive at school every morning, be barred from entry into the school by parents who were guarding the doors to the school, and would then spend the rest of the day in the local school district office. This continued until the acting principal was replaced, and another principal was appointed. This new principal (who incidentally was a former principal of the school but had left to serve in an East Bricktown school) was in agreement with the parents' resistance efforts and accepted restrictions on his activities. Such details are presented mainly to outline the rather special circumstances and difficulties that attended data collection for this chapter and also in general throughout the study.

From these fragmented and limited data collection efforts it is still possible to offer both descriptive and analytical information on the roles of these two principals. A collage of events involving the principals is presented here to convey the flavor of the role as observed and as discussed in these two schools, with particular reference to their problem solving capacity.

#1. Parents met spontaneously with the (acting) principal of one school because they were interested in starting a Community Program for a classroom which, because of staff cutbacks, would not otherwise have had an active Community Program. The principal listened to their suggestions. I did not think he was actively supportive of the parents' ideas, but he did not stand in the way of their plans. Finally, he agreed to their plan to meet with an experienced Learning Community teacher and the assister to implement a program.

#2. This principal met with the Learning Community assister and in the course of a discussion with her about teachers' feelings about a certain teacher, who had been assigned to function as Community cluster teacher, told her about his plans to start a resource center for use by children. He planned to operate this center with the help of two laid-off teachers and two staff members from two other TAG groups who worked in the school. He subsequently had several meetings with these persons, and worked out plans for the center.

#3. The principal met regularly (twice a month) in one school with the School Board of Directors, which was composed equally of parents and teachers, who served as advisors to the principal. All decisions before the principal are placed before this Board, which discusses and votes on them. Concerns of parents and teachers are also discussed by this Board.

#4. In one school, during the regular, twice monthly meetings of the principal with the staff, the principal informed teachers of the latest developments in the school budget crisis. He informed teachers of the stand parents had taken and expressed himself "in sympathy with the parents' position." He stated that he would comply with parents' wishes to seclude him from communication with the Central Board, in order to ensure control of the school by parents, and said also that he would help parents in any legal efforts that would support their position.

#5. The principal of one school attended meetings in Washington, sponsored by the National Association of Elementary School Principals, on standardized testing, accompanying the Project Director, Lillian Weber, at her suggestion. He agreed with and spoke in favor of a resolution that was adopted against standardized testing in the Early

Childhood Grades (i.e., until 3rd grade). At a subsequent meeting of Learning Community Principals, this principal spoke out against standardized testing and asked principals assembled there to sign the position statement that had been issued at the DC meeting.

#6. The principal of one school has created a Principal-Kids Committee. The principal meets with a group of twenty children, representatives from every class in the school (except the kindergarten). The Committee was created to coordinate and implement various cultural activities for which the Project had received additional funding from private sources. However, the group has continued to exist despite the loss of private funding. Children report back to their classes about specific decisions taken by the committee, e.g., the decision to make posters and welcome banners for the reception of an African dance troupe that was to take up a week-long residence in the school and work with children. These meetings were regularly held in the parents' room. The bilingual parent facilitator comments on this group:

> (The principal) is very proud of this group. He wanted the children to be involved in everything--the serving of the food for the fund-raising supper, telling the other kids in their classes about what needed to be done. The kids don't let him down. Did you see how they went up there and danced in front of all those people. Afterwards, he had a party for them. He spent his own money. Only he and the kids were at the party. It was just between them.

#7. A long-time associate of one principal, who is not only a teacher in one of the district schools, but also a parent at the school and a volunteer proposal writer, said of the principal to this writer:

> He has this incredible ability to bring out the best in teachers, parents, and children. He just believes they can do things. I don't know anyone who supports people so well.

#8. One school was declassified as a Title I school, which made it ineligible for several thousands of dollars worth of assistance in teachers' aides and materials and ineligible for the free lunch program. The principal, assisted by parents, hired a lawyer with money raised by the school and took the case to court; the school was then redesignated as a Title I school.

#9. During the current school crisis, one principal took personal charge of requesting from the district office every day the list of teachers who would be assigned to the school as substitutes. In this way, the principal made sure that only teachers who were known to him, who had, in his opinion, a certain degree of expertise, and whose teaching practices were consistent with the rest of the school, were admitted into the school.

#10. One principal worked along with children in creating a mural. He painted a self-portrait, as many of the children did. The Project Director, reviewing the history of development of the mural in that school, stated that the mural could not have been possible without the principal's own personal interest in integrating the arts into the daily curriculum of the school. In the other school, the principal was observed coming frequently to watch children work on their mural and to ask questions of the children, the assisters, and artists who collaborated on the project. This principal was also observed to solicit suggestions from the school custodian on the proper safety precautions and other school regulations for the hanging of the mural (in this case mosaic panels) in the school lunchroom.

#11. One assister and one teacher mentioned, on separate occasions to me, that at the beginning of the school year this principal met with all teachers, usually in their respective Learning Community

groups, to discuss their plans for the school year. This involved discussion of children, of the special needs of certain children, of curriculum, of materials, and of lesson plans. This principal suggested that the teachers of one Learning Community collaborate and run the gym to enable children from different classes on their corridor to participate together. Teachers are now taking turns to run this collaborative program; two teachers, who are "a little scared, because I don't know whether I can make it a good experience for a whole bunch of kids and because I plain don't know enough games they can play," are being helped to prepare for their turn of running the gym activities by an experienced teacher who is also part of that Community.

#12. One principal mentioned in a taped interview with this writer that he is "open" about money and lets the whole school community know about the fiscal status of the school. He states that he divides up the money that is available for instructional materials equally among the teachers, so that they can purchase what they want for their classes, and if they want to, pool their money in each Learning Community. He also states that he asks teachers every year "whether they would like to work with any particular teacher or group of teachers in the coming year." He does this through the "preference sheets" which are required under the UFT contract, which requires that teachers be asked to state their preference about which grade they would like to teach in the coming year. I think that both these measures were suggested to this principal by Learning Community staff as a means to help teachers gain increased autonomy and participate in decision making in their classrooms and Learning community.

#13. This writer observed to a teacher in one of the Learning Community classes that in one class on her corridor she had noticed that there was a slight imbalance of racial composition. The class seemed to have many more white students while the class next door had more Black and Hispanic students. The teacher in whose class this was observed has a reputation for being an outstanding teacher, and I wondered if parents were able to request special placement for their children in a particular class, which might then result in the imbalance noted. (Note that an exact count was not taken by the writer; attendance registers were not checked and they would have to be before a firm assumption could be made.) This teacher responded,

> Well, -- (present principal) would not have permitted this. He would say no to parents if this were to happen (i.e., an imbalanced class). But --(acting principal) is not strong enough on these things.

#14. The Project Director, assessing informally the contribution of one of these principals said,

> Well, there's one thing you can't blame -- (principal) for. It's true he has sometimes too much going in the school (i.e., in the way of several programs) but they are all consistently within the philosophical framework of the school as a whole, "part of his humanistic view."

These events, conversations and impressions, together with hour-long, taped questionnaire interviews of the principals, are cited to form a basis for analytical comment on what constitutes problem-solving behavior on the part of the Learning Community school principals. These have been noted as (a) accessibility, (b) support, and (c) philosophical direction.

First, it appears that <u>accessibility</u> to teachers, children, parents, and others is a function of these two principals. In instance #1, it was noted that a group of parents were able to meet with

the principal by simply walking into his office. It should be noted, however, that these parents are the core of active parents in the school, being present daily and participating actively in classrooms and in other parts of the school. Therefore, the parents may have been able to meet with him in this manner because they are well-known to him and also possibly because he knows them to be capable of strong action if denied access to him regarding a matter they consider important to them. However, it has been noted that the doors to the principal's office in both schools have been observed to be more often open than closed. It has been observed, too, that in both schools persons such as parents, teachers and school staff are frequently seen going in and out of the office. Instance #2 describes the accessibility of the principal to the assister. Assisters and principals state that they meet regularly, either in scheduled weekly meetings or in brief informal conversations. (Also see Figure III.) An experienced teacher describes her relationship with the principal in a way which bears out this characteristic of accessibility:

> It is a very good relationship. It's fiery at times, it vacillates between anger and goodwill, but as a leader of the educational process in that school, as a leader of Open Education, I don't think you can find anybody better. I have spoken to him for hours on educational philosophy, educational styles, what is the best thing for kids. His understanding has been remarkable. I can go to him for almost anything and I have. (emphasis added)

Instance #3 describes the principal's accessibility to parents and teachers through structured and formal meetings such as the regular meetings with the School Board of Directors, composed equally of elected parents and teachers. One principal in a taped interview stated, "I use parents as a reference group." He said that this was somewhat different from some other principals who, in talking about a school

problem might discuss it only with their colleagues, the other principals, assistant principals, and district officials. A glimpse of the principal's accessibility to children is present in instance #6, describing the principal's committee of children. Some of the children there appeared to feel quite comfortable about addressing him and engaging him in conversation. His responses also appeared to testify to his ease in the presence of children.

Implicit in this notion of accessibility is the fact of the high visibility and mobility of the principal within the school. The principal has been observed in hallways, classrooms, the lunchroom, outside the school as children come in accompanied usually by their parents, in the custodian's office, attending meetings of parent groups such as the Club de Padres and the Learning Community Support Committee. It has, however, been observed by this writer that the mobility of the principal within the school has more of a supervisory than a participative quality. For example, when the principal walks the hallways, it is to see if they are clean and well lit. Neither of the principals have been observed to be in classrooms working along with children. Neither has it been mentioned to this writer that the principal visits in a classroom with the purpose of helping a teacher develop curriculum or to make changes in management of the classroom. This analysis is made in the light of studies of British Heads (i.e., principals) who have been observed to be more participative in their interactions with teachers and children in the British Infant School (i.e., working in classrooms, talking to children, working with teachers in developing curriculum).

Note however, that this accessibility is not without its attendant tensions. One of these principals said to the writer, "I am the only principal in the city who has twice been censured by the PA

of his school." Some parents cite his high-handed actions. He cites the power wielded by a small, highly vocal group of parents. Other parents say,

> I don't care about some of the difficulties. Yes, some times it is very difficult, because there are so many interests. But I know that he cares for the children. I know my children are safe in his school.

The comments quoted here testify to the complex and volatile personality (some teachers and parents describe him as brilliant) of the principal, to the power of the parents and to their mutual accessibility in the school problem-solving process.

A second quality of these principals is their capacity to <u>support</u> persons and programs within the school. In instance #4 we see an example of a principal expressing publicly his support of parents in their challenge to the Central Board's ruling that the school day be shortened. This support on the part of both principals for the parents in their respective schools made it possible for the parents to launch an effective and swift resistance to Central Board action. Such political support is not the only kind of support that the principal's role entails in the two schools which form the basis for this study. In the taped interviews with this writer, one principal describes the administrative procedures that he undertook and continues to undertake to ensure the maintenance of the Learning Community in the school. Some of these were: (a) the issuance of preference sheets, whereby teachers could indicate, in addition to the grades they prefer to teach next year (which is a UFT contract regulation), which teachers they would like to work with and whether they would like the assistance of an assister, which "carries a certain commitment to professional growth." (b) the collaboration

with parents to set up the School Board of Directors, composed equally of parents and teachers and serving as an advisory to the principal; (c) the integration of classrooms, to ensure both diversity and cooperation within the student communities, since these are objectives of the Learning Community. Both principals mentioned frequent meetings with teachers and with parents. One principal spoke of "supporting the growing autonomy of teachers" in the school, again by specific "administrative devices", e.g.:

> I encouraged them (the teachers) to make their own schedules (in their own Learning Communities) and not to hold them to a school-wide schedule. The administration really has to support teachers so that they have the authority and the autonomy of their schedules, of the way they run their classrooms, and of the behaviors that they think are appropriate within each Community, of course thinking of the school as a whole.

and again:

> Money--I have always felt that the budget should be an open thing and available to teachers, parents, everybody in the school. Since '71 I have published budget sheets (shows writer an example) to show everybody what is going on, what's available. The school is given a certain amount of money to buy materials and traditionally the administrator decides what is to be ordered or at the very best gets teacher feedback on what is to be ordered and does the ordering and has control over that. I have taken that money and divided it up equally among teachers, taking a little off the top for general school supplies and then handing the money over for the teachers to decide what they want to do with it. In the (Learning Communities) teachers may pool their money and buy materials together.

This supportive role is contrasted with the responses of traditional principals who were part of a study entitled "Urban Principals and Open Schools" (Renshon 1975):

> It's many. It's manifold, it's not limited to any one. I'm first of all responsible for the school...Policies, objectives, usually stem from the principal after consultation with teachers, discussing with them what would be our objectives. I'm also an arbiter in many difficult situations. It always ends up with the assistant

The contrast appears to be that Learning Community principals see themselves more as "enablers" (as one of these principals described himself), coordinators and facilitators, whereas the more traditional principals see themselves as organizers and managers.

A third function of the principal in these schools, which is evident in the instances given above, is the fact that these principals have a strong identification with and espousal of the goals of the Open Education Project. Both describe themselves as being committed to Open Education. In practice this means that both principals feel that the major thrust of their schools is to provide "open" classrooms, i.e. classrooms which are structurally decentralized into learning and activity centers, in which children work with a considerable degree of independence and peer collaboration (see detailed description of Learning Community classroom on pages 63f.). This is not to say that the principal is unsympathetic to the needs of teachers and parents to have more traditionally oriented classrooms. Both schools have a small component of More Traditional classrooms (as they are called in one school). But the principals' basic educational philosophy is consistent with that of the Learning Community Program. One principal observed that the Learning Community has served to make these traditional classrooms less formal.

Thus, we do not see in these schools programs that are completely opposed to the philosophical premises of the Learning Community. We do not see a teaching-by-rote program or a program utilizing the Bereiter-Engleman method. Instead, we do see the influx of programs that appear to be related in their philosophical premises with the Learning Community Program, i.e., the Teachers and Authors Collaborative, which is a TAG group composed of artists, poets and

authors who use such methods as puppetry, film making, and videotape to stimulate children's reading and writing abilities. Another group that has gained admittance into the schools is PLAY, a group that is interested in teaching social studies through art. (See instance #12 where the Project Director assesses the capacity of one principal to maintain his basic philosophical direction while making use of various resources.) Again, in instance #11, the principal is described as maintaining the philosophical direction of the Project (i.e., maintaining a heterogeneous classroom) despite individual parent preferences.

It is useful at this point to draw upon some comparative data that serve to illustrate the differences as well as the similarities that exist among "traditional" principals and "responsive" principals. It might be useful to divide the "responsive" principals' group into American "responsive" principals and British Heads of Infant Schools. The literature and my own observations in the Learning Community schools yield characterizations of each type of principal. It will be seen that the American "responsive" principal falls between the "traditional" principal and the British Infant School Head in terms of the problem-solving characteristics of accessibility, support, and identification with the philosophy of the Open Education Project, which were mentioned above.

The role of the traditional principal is described in the following quote:

> The goal of most principals is to maintain order, maximize production, and minimize dissonance. Principals attempt to achieve this goal by exercising direct authoritarian hierarchical leadership; by arranging schedules, writing letters, by making phone calls and by maintaining tight control over money, supplies, adults, and children.
> (Barth, 1972)

This is compared by the same author with the goals of Open Education principals:

> The principal must be one who attempts to lead, influence and affect teachers' behavior by supporting and responding as well as instigating. In one sense, this role, like that of a more traditional principal, entails apparently menial, insignificant, thankless responsibilities. But principals who would encourage (Open Education) perform these duties for different reasons; to broaden teachers' experiences, to expand their realm of choice and to assist them directly in their classroom. His underlying purpose is not only to maintain a smooth running school but also to provide the teachers with a rich variety of experiences, materials, and opportunities on the basis of which they may make significant educational decisions. (Barth 1975)

The accessibility and philosophical viewpoint of the British Infant School Head is communicated in the two following quotes:

> Most maintained an open door policy encouraging participation in a variety of activities. It was strongly felt that heads had an obligation, both to communicate about the philosophy of the school and to relate the progress of each child to its parents. (Cook and Mack 1971)

> (The British Infant School Head) was not in her office. Instead we found three little girls sitting on the rug, two playing a word-picture matching game and the third child cuddling a rabbit and singing softly to herself. We were told the principal was in one of the classrooms. We soon found her in a class of six and seven year olds, watching them and talking to them as they took their turns at making circles by revolving a sheet of paper on an old record player. Several times during our conversation with her in her office we were interrupted by a child coming in to share a story he or she had directed, or a painting they had just completed, and once she was invited to visit a classroom where children had cooked some treat for the whole class. (from my logs of a visit to an British Infant school in London, 1974).

In a study of American Learning Community Principals, it was noted that they were not as accessible to parents and children as the British Heads were reported to be by several writers. Again, they were not master teachers as the British Heads are, working side-by-side

with teachers in their schools at developing and implementing curriculum. The British Head has key responsibility for providing leadership for the educational and philosophical direction of the school, and meets regularly with teachers in developing curriculum. He or she is also reported in the literature to be a teacher taking over a class for a certain period of time every week or working alongside several teachers during the course of a day. The teaching function is an integral part of the role of the British Infant School Head. This has not been observed or reported among Learning Community Principals.

It seems useful at this point to give a detailed discussion of the study "Urban Principals and Responsive Schools" (Renshon 1975), which has been quoted above. This is a comparative study of principals in Learning Community schools and those in traditionally structured schools in New York City. Eleven principals of each type were the subjects of an in-depth taped questionnaire interview study. The information presented below is what the principals themselves, in each case, have reported about themselves and the schools in which they work, and is not the result of observations on the part of that author. Several analytical and statistical points were reformulated by me from the study, especially as they appear to relate to what is perceived by myself as the problem-solving capacity of Learning Community principals when compared with Traditional principals. The two principals who are the subjects of the present study were also interviewed as part of the Renshon study.

Both sets of principals, i.e., Traditional Principals and Learning Community Principals, were asked, "As an administrator, what are

your major goals?" Fifty-six percent of both sets of principals mentioned the skill areas of reeading and math and the importance of increasing pupil achievement in these areas. Traditional Principals then mentioned discipline (33%), physical education (11%) and supplies (11%). Learning Community Principals mentioned their priorities: to create a good learning climate (22%), to promote democratic values (22%), to provide options (11%), to increase parent support (11%), to permit teacher autonomy (22%), and to encourage children to like school (11%).

On the question of how each set of principals spent their time in various parts of the school, the following responses were noted:

Time Spent In	"Responsive" Principals	Traditional Principals
Their Offices	28%	36%
Classrooms	42%	26%
Halls and Lunchrooms	25%	26%
District Office and Out of School	0%	6%
Meetings	4%	6%

The fact that of the principals responding, almost twice as much time was reported to be spent in classrooms by Learning Community Principals is seen as related to their capacity for problem solving around issues of staff development, accessibility to and interest in children, and interest in the curriculum.

On the subject of whether principals institute any formal or informal regulations affecting parents' visits to clasrooms: 33% of Learning Community Principals mentioned that parents were free to visit the school compared with 9% of the Traditional Principals who made the same statement. 55% of Traditional Principals mentioned that passes were required by parents to visit classes while no Learning Community Principals mentioned them.

On the subject of whether students were welcome to visit their principals: 50% of the Learning Community Principals stated that students felt free to visit them in their offices. 50% of the Traditional Principals stated this was so. However, the difference in attitudes between these two sets of principals toward students is here quoted:

Learning Community Principals:

> Within the Learning Community Program they tend to be more open and sharing and inviting. They want me to come in and see what they are doing. They tell me about what they are doing and there is generally more of that kind of interaction, more verbalization. With children who are not in the Community Program, there is still friendliness, but it seems to be on a more limited basis, and then things will vary according to the teacher.

Traditional Principals:

> Sometimes when I visit classrooms, children might want to speak with me. I don't encourage that too much. I will say to a pupil or talk to the class and say if you want to speak to me, you must get your teacher's permission, because this can have bad effects on the teachers. Many times, when I see children in the halls or in the office they will want to speak to me during the school day, but they are under the jurisdiction of the teacher.

What did principals and students talk about? 73% of the Traditional Principals mentioned that students usually talked to them about problems and crises. 33% mentioned that their exchange was characterized by "mutual respect" and 10% stated that students spoke to them about their work. In contrast, 27% of Learning Community Principals mentioned that children brought in work they had done, and only 10% stated that they talked to children about discipline problems.

The ability to relate to children about their learning and to create an atmosphere in which children feel comfortable talking with principals about their learning, is seen as part of the capacity for

problem solving exhibited by Learning Community Principals, when contrasted to Traditional Principals. On the subject of discipline, Learning Community Principals with both Open and Traditional classes in their schools were asked to compare discipline problems in the two types of classrooms. 86% of these principals stated that there were fewer discipline problems in the Open classrooms and 14% stated that they noticed no difference. Again, both Learning Community Principals and Traditional Principals were asked to describe the methods they used to handle discipline problems. The Traditional Principals mentioned such methods as sending a note home to the parents stating what the child had done, having the child apologize, using positive reinforcement, placing the child in the back of the room, and keeping them out for a day. The Responsive Principals mentioned such methods as speaking to the child about the discipline problem, separating two children who were fighting, arranging for a child who is having trouble to find some areas to be in other than the classroom, giving more challenging work to a bored child, and making home visits.

The approach to discipline problems appears to be more personalized and informal on the part of the Learning Community Principals, who, in some instances, are willing to admit that discipline problems may arise because the child is not being challenged with interesting enough work. Traditional schools, from my own experience, rarely tend to see discipline problems from the child's point of view.

Both sets of principals were asked whom they considered to be major sources of support in helping them accomplish their administrative objectives.

50% of the Traditional principals mentioned their assistant principals compared with 25% of the Learning Community principals who stated the same.

38% of the Traditional principals mentioned district staff compared with 14% of the Learning Community principals.

57% of the Learning Community principals mentioned teachers, compared with 38% of the Traditional principals.

30% of the Learning Community principals mentioned assisters and the Assisters' Service as a support.

38% of the Traditional principals and 14% of the Responsive principals mentioned parents as a major source of support.

On this last point, Renshon, the author of the comparative study, makes the following comment:

> It is in the perception of parents as a source of support that my hypothesis did not hold up. It is possible the (Responsive) Principals, although recognizing the greater participation of parents in the classroom, have not yet recognized the support value of parents. This situation may well change in future years as parents feel more and more confident in approaching the principals on a peer basis, and providing them with support when possible.

In my taped interviews with the two Learning Community principals, both stated the importance of parents in every aspect of the Learning Community Program. One principal spoke of the importance of helping all teachers develop "good parent relations" and described himself as being "good at working with parents." The other principal stated that he used parents as a "reference group" asking their advice and opinion on all important issues facing the school through such structures as the School Board of Directors as well as informal discussions. My own perception of why fewer Learning Community principals in that study stated parents as a source of support, is that in the majority of the Learning Community schools, the parents rather than the principals were instrumental in initiating the Program within their schools. Thus, principals might perceive themselves as supporting the parents' goals rather than as receiving support from parents.

The Principal - Assister Relationship

A point that was brought up in the taped interviews concerns the assister's relationship to the principal and to the rest of the school. One principal stated that a problem of the assister's role is:

> ...the emotional identification of the (assister) with the classroom teacher. They have been classroom teachers. They are not management oriented or supervisor oriented. ...what is needed is some awareness on the part of the assister about total school-wide issues, that affect or will affect the (Learning Community) Program.

and again:

> The problem is that the (assister) is not really a part of the principal's team. The (assister) is part of the (Central University) team, the (University) Center team, but in view of our own particular time commitment, there is a need for the (assister) to be part of the principal's team and be able to anticipate things and to give out information, and not think that the principal is going to necessarily react punitively about something he or she learns from the (assister). There should be more assessments made about the performance of individual teachers, more of an evaluation, especially whenever one is an experienced teacher and there are very few beginners. I get the uneasy feeling that people are playing both ends against the middle and the principal is caught in the middle.

This principal went on to give a specific illustration of a lack of communication between the assister and the principal.

> I got a dozen letters of complaint about a teacher whom I put in charge of a 1-2 class. I had one of the key experienced (assisters) working with that teacher all year long. I never observed this and she (the assister) claims she never heard about it. But if you've got a dozen letters, four for and twelve against, there appears to be a definite lack of involvement with the parent base of that classroom.

The other principal who was interviewed had a different reaction to the role of the assister:

> The (external assister) working with teachers who have voluntarily asked for their help in a supportive non-supervisory way is very important. They generally

> work with teachers in a way that allows them to find their own strengths at doing things with children and with other teachers. I consider the (assisters) as an important and valuable part of the whole development of the Program in the school. By being on-site and offering their sensitivity and support and expertise, they work with individual teachers and they bring teachers together.

and again:

> Principals are concerned with a number of things and one of them is evaluating teachers. We would like to have help in that area. But evaluation has to be seen in a larger sense; it has to be seen in relation to staff development. As I said earlier, the role of the (assister) would be jeopardized if he or she was perceived by teachers as a rating official or an extension of the principal for <u>that</u> purpose. So, I think it is important for the principal not to get into that too deeply, and to use the feedback given by the (assister) and analyse it. Sometimes an (assister) will tell me, "Well, we are working on this, but you should go upstairs and look," and that is all an (assister) could or should do.

The above quotes testify to the complexity of the assisters role and to the tensions that might exist between assisters, school supervisors and principals. As earlier stated (see Chapter III) the assister role has been conceived to be <u>outside</u> the supervisory structure of the school. At the same time, the assister is working with teachers on an almost daily basis, and therefore spends more time with teachers on specific issues of their professional growth than the principals or other school supervisors do in a large urban school. Thus the principal might look to the assister to evaluate teachers. However, this evaluative role would necessarily affect the relationship between teachers and assisters. It appears to me that the assister might take greater responsibility to inform the principal about the progress or lack of it in individual teachers (which, in one of the two schools studied, appears to have not been done) and that the principal should question the assister closely on teacher development and analyze this

feedback for future action on his part. However, a principal would need to appreciate that the validity of the assister's role deends on his/her non-supervisory, non-evaluative posture. The teacher usually accepts the assister's help precisely because it is non-supervisory. A principal points this out:

> I used to be a district math coordinator. Principals would call in a math coordinator or an assistant principal to help a teacher. That usually means that the principal thinks this teacher is weak. The teachers used to pick it up right away. It is not an organized thing like this (i.e., the assister's help). It is handed down. It is not something that the teacher has volunteered to receive in an ongoing developmental way. (Interview with the writer)

Finally, each principal reflected upon the skills and capacities that he found himself utilizing to maintain the school:

> ...set a kind of tone, work as an enabler to help people achieve their goals. You have to learn, especially now, to work within the resources that you have. You have to move people in terms of teacher training. Make sure that children are getting the particular basics. You have to take care of all the bureaucratic nonsense, so that you can do the things that are important for the school. (I spend a lot of private time taking care of that, because 90% of my evaluation is based on how I do in that area.) Really work to help the school survive. And you do that by long-term planning, by being less frantic, by helping teachers maintain a steady growth, so that they don't peak in the first month and fall apart afterwards. I want everybody to feel they are participating in this school.

> A principal has to have a point of view about many things, a strong commitment to education, a commitment to children. I feel a strong commitment to certain democratic values; I support real involvement. I think parents have a very definite place in the school--whether in fund-raising, working in classrooms, governance. The school is a complex social organization. A principal must be able to work with diverse groups to get a consensus-- the pedagogical staff, the kitchen staff, the custodial staff. A principal must have experience with kids. I would say a love for kids. (Interview with the writer)

CHAPTER VII: PHILOSOPHICAL CONCEPTS AND THEIR RELATIONSHIPS TO PROJECT EFFORTS AT "SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT"

ABSTRACT

The salient observation made in this section is that the Open Education Project staff have shared assumptions about children, parent involvement, and the nature of school change, which it verbalizes and demonstrates in working with parents, teachers, administrators and children. The staff explains its actions and plans in the light of these shared assumptions which are described in the text of this chapter as:

a) View of the Child, Heterogeneity, Voluntarism, Accessibility and Community, with such sub-concepts as Reversibility and Educability. The manner in which these concepts and sub-concepts find practical application in the Learning Community Program, as well as the limitations of some of these concepts, are noted.

b) It is speculated that the possession of a shared view of education, which is contained in these philosophical concepts, may well have implications for consistency and continuity of efforts for school improvement.

PHILOSOPHICAL CONCEPTS AND THEIR RELATIONSHIPS TO PROJECT EFFORTS AT "SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT"

In this section, I would like to make two preliminary observations. First, the Open Education Project is part of an historical and philosophical context that is identified as the Progressive trend in American and international education. It is most closely related to the theories and works of John Dewey, Johann Heinrich Pestalozzi, Froebel, Montessori, and American educators of the thirties associated with the founding of the Bank Street College of Education, Merrill Palmer Institute, etc. Its contemporary connection within the Projects' focus on the child's construction of reality and with the British Infant Schools and with other Open Education efforts in this country, notably the Education Development Center (EDC) in Massachusetts, The Center for Teaching and Learning of the University of North Dakota, and the Vermont School. Second, the Project's actions in regard to school improvement are based upon, and informed by, its philosophy.

On the first point, one could make the further statement that Open Education is therefore not a "model" or an "innovation" or a "new method" in the sense of computer programmed instruction or a kit to improve children's vocabulary. It has, instead, a continuity with a century long tradition of a particular view of schools, of children and teachers, and of the school's relationship to the larger community. Details of this view are examined in subsequent pages under the following frameworks -- the view of the child, accessibility, heterogeneity, voluntarism, community.

The second point, namely that the Open Education Project's philosophical concepts direct its strategy, raises a set of questions: Is it useful, perhaps even essential, to have a certain philosophy about school change? In what ways is a school assistance group served by a philosophy? What can and does happen in the absence of a philosophy? What has been observed about the benefits to this group of having a philosophy? Is there a connection between the effectiveness of this group and its philosophy? These questions are also examined in subsequent pages.

Major Philosophical Concepts

The major philosophical concepts mentioned above are view of the child, accessibility, heterogeneity, voluntarism, and community. Several sub-concepts, such as reversibility and educability are treated in this examination. The Project considers itself to have a philosophy, and this is expressed as "This is our way," "This is our direction," or other similar statements. A former assister, presently an assistant principal, wrote an article in the Project's own publication, Notes, describing some of these philosophical concepts. However, it should be noted that these are not upheld as rigid tenets, but as guide posts for the direction of the Project staff's activity in schools. Examples of these concepts are given below.

View of the Child

> The world itself rests upon the breath of the children in the schoolhouse. (Verse fromm the Talmud inscribed upon the cover of an issue of Notes)

This is the most pervasive and basic concept of the Open Education Project. By this is meant that a particular view of the child is held

by the Project staff as a whole and shared by its participants in the schools. Further, it appears that this particular view is facilitated in numerous ways by Project staff during a major proportion of its work with teachers, with parents, with administrators, during work sessions among themselves, and even during social meetings among themselves and with Project participants. This particular view of the child is stated by the Project to be its basic rationale for all its work in the schools.

The Project's view of the child is not an original one. Such a view was articulated by John Dewey in his book "The Child and the Curriculum," and in other works, and it has found its concrete expression in the Dewey School, an experimental lab school at the University of Chicago. Jean Piaget's study of intellectual development in children gave further substance to this view. The growth of the British Infant School also gave practical expression to the studies of Dewey, Piaget, Montessori and Froebel, strengthened by the knowledge of British educators such as Susan and Nathan Isaacs, and, more recently, John Blackie, Moira Mackenzie and others. It is basically also the view held by "Open Education" in this country. The point being made here is simply that the Project's view of the child is rooted in and has continuity with a hundred year tradition in American and international education.

The Project's staff appears to have developed a composite view, which is based on these thinkers and practitioners, but is enriched by the staff's experiences with teachers, parents, administrators and assisters. This composite view envisages the child as an active and competent participant in his/her own learning, as having curiosity and

pleasure in the larger world, and as having the skills and competencies required to make "sense" of the external and internal world. Such a view speaks often of "the total child," the child as an integrated and unique individual. This view of the "total child" is opposed to the view of some educators who see the child as a combination of skills and sub-skills which may be developed by the application of specific methods. Again, the Project's view of the child is in disagreement with yet other educators who see the child from what the Project Director terms "a deficit orientation", i.e., seeing children as incapable or deficient in specific functions. The recent and rapid growth of interest in Learning Disabilities, an area which has come to include a variety of vague "problems" which are not tangible or clearly observable, is seen by the Project as an example of this trend of thought. Another trend, that is eschewed by the Project, takes a faddish view of the child, i.e., those programs which attempt one year to develop children's cognition, then discard that the next year to develop children's affective or moral development, or next year their aesthetic sense, etc. The Project's view of the child maintains that, above all, the child is more than the sum of his/her parts. At one Assister meeting the Project Director decried the popular attempts to view "children as Piagetian constructs", i.e., to view children only in terms of Piagetian stages of intellectual development. This fragmented view of the child is regularly attacked or remarked upon during meetings, workshop sessions and seminars with parents, teachers and administrators.

A characteristic of the Project's view of the child is that it is a dynamic and frequently examined view. It is clearly not a static and prescribed set of rules about children's development or strategies for dealing with children. In addition to examination of this view within the group, there is engagement with other individuals and groups who share substantially the same view. For example, the Project has an ongoing relationship with a documentation group called the Vermont School Program. Project staff and project participants--teachers, parents, and principals--regularly attend workshops and seminars given by this group. This group describes itself as employing a phenomenological approach to documentation. The workshop titles are in themselves revealing of this group's orientation: "The Child as Thinker," "The Child as Integrator of Language," "Vulnerabilities, Coping and Growth". Again, the Open Education Project draws particularly upon the work of anthropologist Vera John, who is making a study of children in the Pueblo culture, to discover implications for teaching and learning in the Learning Community. A file on child-rearing practices among the Netsilik Eskimos is shown to parents to make points about the natural development of language within the informal setting of the family. A group of parents who are attending an open meeting of the Assisters' Service may begin to talk about their own childhood experiences or that of their children, and this becomes a starting point for analysis of the Project's assumptions about children. Recently, the Project's staff, under the leadership of the Director, undertook an intensive study of the Project's assumptions about the place of natural materials, e.g.,

sand, water, clay, etc., in Learning Community classrooms, reformulating the view of these materials as intrinsically powerful emotional phenomena, rather than as mere stimuli, to provoke such learning concepts as special relationships, conversation, etc. This again provoked discussion about "the view of the child." The three week annual Summer Institutes are deliberately designed to involve teachers in original investigation of natural or artifical phenomena, e.g., wood, fabric, number concepts, etc., in a manner analogous to the active inquiry mode which children in Learning Community classrooms are encouraged to do.

> In this summer institute I really learned what it is to be a child in the (Open) classroom. We set up these rooms but we don't know what it is to ask the child to go explore and find out for himself. You cannot ask a child to do that unless you (the teacher) know how to explore and find out. When I go back I am going to set up my classroom much more carefully. I am going to put myself in the child's place. I am going to be much more sensitive to what we ask children to do in school in our classrooms. (Teacher from the NIE-funded Louisville Project who was a participant in the Open Education Project's annual Summer Institute, 1976).

It is not an overstatement to say that an overwhelmingly large proportion of the time spent by Project staff is in activities that relate directly to this view. These activities occcur on many levels, in informal conversations, in structured seminars, in curriculum workshops, and in social meetings. Specific examples may be given to support this observation. During the Experienced Teacher Meetings, teachers reflected upon their development over the past year in the context of changed teaching situations because of the budget cuts. These seminars were filled with teachers' perceptions of children's

development. In the treatment of the Project's work with teachers (see Chapter IV) the point is made that a characteristic of the experienced teacher is his/her highly developed understanding of children's development within this particular view of the child. A teacher, principal, or even a parent is praised, criticized or assessed by Project staff largely on the basis of how he or she relates to children. One day, in visiting a school to assess the capability of new teachers to work with the Learning Community, the Project Director assessed the teachers in questions based on "their feeling for children."

One interesting observation for this writer has been that Project staff and a large proportion of Learning Community teachers speak about children in the same tone as they speak to them. There appears to be little disparity between the Project's view of children and the staff's actions towards children. This point is closely associated with an important aspect of the assister's role, which is "modeling" for teachers and administrators how one may relate to children in a way that the Project considers to be "respectful" of children.

To avoid giving the impression that Project staff and participants talk about children "only during office hours" or only in a serious, analytical way, some examples are given to illustrate an interest in children that is not merely within the scope of an official role. One day, an assister in the midst of her daily schedule, urged this writer "to go look in --'s class. A child named R___ has done an incredible drawing of a man on a motorbike--a kindergarten child. Amazing!" An assister described, to two other assisters

after a meeting, how she dropped in on her child's teacher at his nursery school, and upon asking the teacher, "How's everything?" was told, "Your son is doing well, and you will be so proud when we have finished with him," to which the assister said she replied, "Well, I am proud of him already." A teacher in an informal conversation with an assister told how in her former school the principal had once said, quite seriously, "Well, the school's just fine today; most of the kids aren't here." There is the assumption among the Project staff and its participants that their view of the child is not supported by the practices of the majority of schools and persons involved with schools, and that theirs is a minority view that is in danger of being eroded through the growth of such school practices as standardized testing, cutbacks in staff, larger class sizes, the availability of Federal funds, for "deficit oriented" programs and the growth of interest in learning disabilities. This assumption is perhaps confirmed by research on the function of schools as "joyless", custodial, institutions (e.g. Silberman, Crisis in the Classroom; Ogbu, The Next Generation).

Related to this concept of children's development are several sub-concepts. One is the notion of educability. Project staff and participants speak of and enact methods by which they provide learning opportunities for all children, regardless of the particular difficulties they might have. An assister conducted a "reading investigation" with a group of sixth grade boys who had been termed non-readers. Working with them for over six months, she gradually built upon the fact of their friendship with one another, encouraging them to become critics of such literature as was available to them,

e.g., basal readers, storybooks. She discovered that the children were receptive to fine language and a good story line and were able appraisers of the quality (or lack of it) of reading material that was made available to them. Following is an excerpt from her account:

> Certain patterns emerge in the data. The boys (who had been characterized as non-readers) were highly attentive to language and the style of language. Some books were criticized because the sentence structure was too simple, too repetitive in its sound and in its sentence pattern. Not only was stilted language held up as a defect, but also the context...In the belief that very little reading material is within these children's grasp, remedial specialists tend to emphasize the systematic instruction of one or two skills on the theory that over time, as a child accumulates more and more "skills" and begins putting them together, he will be able to read a book with complete fluency. The reality remains that such isolated skill lessons have very little chance of engaging students intellectually.

The children's reaction to one of these skills-oriented texts is quoted below:

> --The characters are confusing.
> --It is very very boring.
> --Too much Nan, Dan, Dad.
> --Don't make any sense. It repeats too many words.

Implicit in this notion of <u>educability</u> is a criticism of prevailing school policies in which children become "throw-outs" because they are "disruptive." This view of the educability of the child claims that the responsibility of compulsory education is to find ways to meet the needs of the child, rather than to make these needs irrelevant to the school and to fault the child for the school's own inability to meet these needs. Closely related to this concept of educability is the notion of <u>reversibility</u>, i.e., that the child, if found to have learning difficulties, must be approached by the schools

as being capable, over time and with the support of adults and other children within the school environment, to overcome or to cope with these difficulties. Again, implicit in this notion is the reluctance to categorize or label children with such tags as "hyperactive," "sexually precocious," "disruptive," "immature." Specific strategies are undertaken to avoid such labeling and to assist teachers in understanding the reasons for children's behavior. For example, observation of children is actively encouraged among teachers. A teacher may ask another teacher or an assister to come into her room and observe a child in her class who "is having difficulty." After the observations, there is a discussion. From these observations may come suggestions and recommendations that the teacher may be able to utilize. Observations are carried on informally as an accepted and legitimate part of professional activity. In some situations, these observations have been given a more structured and more exhaustive treatment through the practice of "staffing", a procedure whereby teachers of a Community sit down together and collectively address the difficulty a particular teacher may be having in providing for a child in his or her class. (See description of this procedure in Chapter IV.)

It appears that the very structure of the Community classroom and the whole Learning Community is geared to give optimal expression to the view of the child, which has been explicated in detail above. The physical reorganization of the classroom, altered from desks in neat rows to activity areas equipped with materials, lays emphasis on the ability of the child to experiment with objects and make choices about

the direction of his learning. A child works in a corner making a clay model of a dinosaur that he saw on a visit to the Museum of Natural History. A group of children sit on the rug playing a game of animal lotto. Two children are taking a survey of the class noting preferences in ice cream flavors, which they depict on a chart. Two girls chat as they sit side by side working on different kinds of weaving looms. Two boys conduct an experiment using paper clips and a magnet that are provided in the science area. By de-emphasizing whole class instruction and the teacher-centered classroom, the Program seeks to give children a more active part in their own learning. At the same time, the teacher is called upon to structure the environment of the classroom in such a way as to provide the maximum opportunity for children to exercise their initiative in selecting areas for study and in completing projects. This means that the teacher closely observes the children's use of the environment she has set up, engages in discussion with them about their activities, suggests directions for their activities, encourages or directs them to complete work undertaken, and makes changes and modifications in the learning environment based upon her observations of and interactions with the children. A teacher describes this process:

> Therefore the room had to contain an awful lot of things with which the children could have experiences. Our work would be to enlist the child's own concept of himself, involve him in his own learning process. We build, not for a week but for a whole year of experiences. As we were interested in the child making a relationship between home and school, we would try to have him plan his day and see which experiences he would have in school and how we could build on that to have some experiences at home and then bring them back to school. For example, we did some research on ice melting in the classroom.

> Children carried this experiment and did further experiments at home--melting ice on heaters or in steam, or away from windows or on the window sill. From the study of ice and from the study of melting, many class books were made and experience charts were written. Children who were not yet reading could read the word "ice cubes" because it was a word we used over and over again. Then the child read "melt", and then "freeze", etc., etc. (Teacher telling parents about curriculum in the classroom during a meeting of the Learning Community Support Committee.)

The Child in the Open Education Program. My observations in Learning Community classrooms have yielded some general characteristics despite differences in individual teaching styles, differing classroom arrangements, and different approaches to curriculum.

It seems to me that the very arrangement of the room and utilization of the corridor, and by a further extension, the use of the whole school and the surrounding community, provide an opportunity for the practical application of the Project's view of the child. First, let us consider the classroom. Regardless of the variety of teaching styles, the physical arrangement of the classroom is in contrast to the traditional classroom. Rather than the fixed line of desks in straight rows (in some traditional schools these are nailed to the floor to prevent movement), the room is arranged into "activity centers", "learning centers" or "areas", as they are sometimes called. Thus, a math area may consist of six chairs and two desks that have been moved against each other to form a large work surface. The table may have a quantity of manipulative materials such as cuisenaire rods, geometric solids, attribute blocks, and weighing and measuring equipment. The teacher may have also placed some math problems there which she has run off on the school rexograph machine. Two children may end up recording their experiments, "We found that twenty-four shells and

eight rods weighed the same." The teacher might come by and ask, "Can you figure out how many more shells you needed?", and the children working further might write down "16" or even, "We needed three times as many shells as rods before they would weigh the same." During such an experience, a child exercises several problem-solving capacities. First he chooses the activity that he would like to be involved with, sometimes by himself, sometimes with the help of the teacher or other children. Since the child's position in the class is not pre-assigned, it is necessary for him to negotiate his use of space in the classroom. Sometimes an area may contain the following direction from the teacher: "Only four children allowed in the reading corner at a time." A child may need to negotiate with another child or a group that has already formed, and ask permission to join them. An older child (many of the Learning Community classrooms are age-integrated) may help a younger child with reading or with making a construction of a store that they had observed on a recent trip, thus necessitating cooperation and helping relationships between them. In one observation, children of a 5-6 grade went to see a play put on by the children of a 1-2 class on their corridor. While there was some initial giggling, the older children praised the younger children for their efforts and tactfully told them how they could do something better the next time.

In many classrooms it may be observed that there is a board which lists all activity areas in the room, and the children indicate with their name tags which activity area they are working in at a particular time. A child may choose to take his work out to the

corridor where, with perhaps three other children, he may conduct a survey connected with their study of the human body, on whether righthanded people walk to the right side of a straight line and lefthanded people walk to the left when blindfolded. (Children found this was not so, "at least not in their sample," they said to me.) Two tiny kindergartners were observed to visit in the 3rd-4th grade class for the morning. Afterwards they went back and reported on what they had seen, which the teacher wrote up and displayed on the walls of their corridor. Several children were observed to come out into the corridor to join a parent who had offered to teach them how to crochet. A child left his classroom to join a group of older children in another class who were working on constructing polyhedrons. The social interaction that these examples offer is seen to be basic to the Learning Community Program. The Learning Community Program's expansive use of field trips to study their neighborhood, various other parts of the city and even rural areas in other parts of the state are seen as helping children develop understanding of and competence in their environment. In the case of these inner-city schools, this amounts to the development of survival skills and an awareness of the diverse cultures that co-exist, not always peacefully, within this environment. (See Chapter IV where an assister utilized the language skills of Spanish-speaking children in a tour of the community, making other children aware of these skills.)

Over the past year, the Project and a group of parents have been collaborating in an interview study of the parents' and the children's reflections upon the effects of the Learning Community experience upon

them. The second class of Learning Community graduates (i.e., children who have had Learning Community experiences throughout their elementary school) has left to join the junior high schools, and it was felt that it is now appropriate to follow the progress of these children in other settings as well as to ask them to reflect upon their experiences within the Program. One parent who was involved in interviewing both children and parents stated:

> We found out that these children are so involved in making the transition into junior high school that, they are so close to their experience in elementary school and are using all their energies to cope with their new situations that they are not ready to step back and review their earlier experiences. Perhaps we should wait another year or try to catch them in high school.

This parent went on to describe, however, what she felt was her child's capacity to work things out, even when they seem confusing and difficult at first.

> When --(child) went off to junior high school (a public school in the city) I remember he told me about it afterwards. There were all these courses that they had to choose from and some they had to take. Well, he and three other kids who had all gone to school with him (in the Learning Community at --) went over to one of the kids' apartment and they teamed themselves up to work on the problem. They worked together and finally they decided what each of them would take. They decided what alternatives they would consider, they even selected 3 or 4 possible alternatives; they were realistic. They have a history of support and working with each other and collaborating with and helping each other from their elementary school experiences. And they applied it to their new situation. (emphasis added here)

Below, for puposes of comparison, I have quoted findings from a research study conducted on graduates from Open Education classrooms in North Dakota.* High School graduates of Open classsrooms in the North Dakota Study were asked a set of questions in an effort to determine

"whether the New School experience influenced their basic view of the elementary school and how they might view, in the years ahead, elementary schools in relation to their own children?" (Again, I have selected from the responses those that pertain to problem-solving capacity, as I have interpreted it).

> Give a foundation in reading, writing and math. Reading is especially important.
>
> Help children learn responsibility (teachers don't have to do so much.
>
> Help children have choices in selecting reading materials, class projects.
>
> Provide an introduction to other children (social aspects are important).

What appears interesting in this study is that these high school students reflected their own experiences in describing the school, perhaps indicating that they found their own Open Classroom experiences positive and that they would support Open Education in the future. For example, they mentioned:

> Children's work should be on the walls.
>
> The whole building should be open for use.
>
> There should be many field trips in the community.
>
> More than square rooms where people sit all day in one place.

---

*Excerpted in Insights, 1976, a publication of the Center for Teaching and Learning, North Dakota. Note: The Director of this Open Education Project is Dean Vito Perrone, an associate of Professor Weber.

The study concludes:

> What will happen to the children when they reach the highly structured, subject matter-oriented secondary school? While this study can hardly respond completely for all youngsters who experienced (Open) classroom learning environments, it is clear that the particular population examined fared well on traditional measures of academic success, tended to be more verbal and more positive about their school experiences, more actively involved in extra-curricular activities, more independent as learners, and more concerned about social issues than their counterparts who had not been involved in (Open) classroom settings. In short, they were successful students in the secondary scchool.

Earlier in this chapter I have recorded some of my own conversations with Learning Community children. Later in this chapter, children's reaction to their setting is explored. In addition, I am reminded of conversations with these children which have special reference to concerns of whether they experience themselves as competent, cooperative individuals capable of decision making, which to my mind are concerns linked with problem-solving capacity. One day in conversation with a fifth-sixth grader, we got to talking about comparisons between his class and a traditional classroom not far from his classroom:

> Well, the kids in --(teacher's) class learn but I think we learn in a better way.
>
> What do you mean, a better way?
>
> Well, we learn calculus, and you know some kids don't learn about that 'til they finish high school. But it's not that. It's more fun here. You can do things you want to do. You don't have to do everything at the same time. Those kids told me they never went on a trip. I think its okay to have fun and learn.

My most recent experience with the competence, autonomy and cooperative ability that the Learning Community Program appears to engender among children, was when in writing this chapter, I decided I

would like to include a diagram of a Learning Community classroom to convey more clearly its physical arrangement. I went to the classroom (a third-fourth) grade I had selected and asked the teacher to help me identify two children who could execute the diagram within the brief time that I had, which was one day. The teacher asked the class which children had been engaged in drawing diagrams of their homes last year. He further asked these children which of them had drawn their diagrams to scale. Two boys raised their hands. I then drew these two boys aside and explained my request. The following conversation ensued.

I: Well, I would like you to do a picture for me of the class. I don't have to have it in exact scale, but as close as you can manage. Try to show the different areas and what they are used for. Do it as you think it looks, not as it should be.

1st child:
Well, in the floor plan I did last year, I did mostly everything in scale.

2nd child:
Do you want all the levels of the room to be shown, or just the floor level?

I: No, I would like all the levels because that is what makes this room so interesting.

2nd child:
What do you want it for?

and after I had explained:

Are you from the Central Board?

(The budget cuts have produced a rather unfavorable impression among students about the Central Board of Education.) I hastened to clarify that it was for a group in Washington that is funded by Congress.

1st child:
When do you want it. If we work all day today we could finish it today.

I said I didn't want to interfere with their other work.

2nd child:
I have to leave early today.

1st child:
Lets get -- (another child) in on this. If you're not going to be here we won't be able to finish it.

He calls in -- and he explains to him my request.

2nd child:
Let's check what kind of paper you want, what size.

After I agree to his selection, the three boys begin work immediately at a large work table nearby.

In concluding this section, I would make the tentative assessment that the smallest unit of capacity for school problem solving is the child in the Learning Community Program, who, within the facilitative structure provided her/him (I am not claiming that all Learning Communities and classrooms are at the same desirable stage of development) utilizes her/his capacity for autonomy, collaborative relationships, positive awareness of culture and other differences, experience of his/her physical environment, decision making, and enjoyment of school experiences. This point more than any other appears to validate the work of the Project in the schools. While the theory of Open Education has had impact at the university level, has influenced the training of teachers, and has influenced principals and district level staff, these are secondary to the basic changes it has attempted in the schools, changes that have been geared to influence the daily lives of children in inner-city schools.

The Project's Concept of Heterogeneity

> ...Thus our decision in favor of heterogeneous grouping was in the first instance a recognition of the failure of homogeneous grouping. Children were heterogeneous and diverse and needed to be provided for. Our analysis indicated that provision had to be made not only for academic heterogeneity and diversity of ability that might underlie the records on performance, but for the diversity of children's emotional and psychological development. The teacher's preoccupation could not be solely with content because there was no way of dealing with only a child's intake of content. A child could not be disconnected from his body, his behavior, his selective focus, his interest, his individual way of organizing and adapting to his experiences..(The Director in the Notes summer 1974 issue)

It was noted under "View of the Child" in this chapter that the Project sees children as unique and distinct individuals with personal styles of cognition and affect, and that the purpose of teachers and other school personnel within our current system of compulsory education should be to identify and support these distinct sylcs and needs. Inherent in this view, is the notion of difference. Children, as indeed all individuals, are regarded as being uniquely different in their organization and perception of the world. For example, one child may need more time than another to understand multiplication. A child may be a slow reader but have great facility for comprehension, while another may exhibit the opposite traits. The Project's view is that such variations should be respected and that provisions should be made by schools to support these variations, rather than to see them as difficulties and as deviations from some arbitrary norm, established through standardized measures or through notions of correlations between ability and race, etc. The project has operationalized this view of "positive differences" in the Learning Community structure in both schools which are the focus of this study.

Classes are made up of mixed ability groupings--i.e. children in Learning Community classes are not grouped according to their reading ability. The traditional 2-1, 2-2, 2-3, 2-4 is not followed in Learning Community classes. Instead, Learning Community teachers teach classes that are composed of children who may exhibit varying levels of ability in reading, math, social development, etc.

The Project Director states that the Project has "an absolute commitment to heterogeneity--on the basis of age, ability, race and ethnicity." In the two Learning Community schools, on which the major points of this study are based, this assertion appears to be true. Both these schools are predominantly Learning Community schools. Each has had the Program on a continuing basis for about eight years. Both schools have inter-age grouping, so that classes do not have only one grade but are mixed, i.e.,classes are organized as K-1, 1-2, 3-4, 5-6. Over the years, variations have been tried, e.g., K-1, 1-2, 2-3, 3-4, 4-5, etc., or a 4-5-6 grade, with teachers, parents, administrators and Project staff discussing the value of these experimental groupings for the children. While not all Learning Community classrooms are inter-aged, it should be noted that the Communities themselves are inter-aged, as children from different classes use the corridor and there is interaction across different age groups. Indeed, the corridor is conceived as "a pipeline of communication" facilitating even greater interaction among teachers and children, who form part of a Learning Community, and even across Learning Communities. Also, group activities involving children from various classrooms, e.g., a joint trip to the Museum or a few children from one class visiting with another class for part of the day, are encouraged and have been observed

to take place. The mural projects undertaken in three schools, in which the Project works, involved children throughout the schools working together and, thus, were significant examples of such comprehensive inter-age cooperation.

It is useful at this point to place this concept of heterogeneity within the context of the community it serves, the nine schools in District R. A detailed examination of the characteristics of this district and a review of its experience with decentralization and with the Balanced Class Project were given in Chapter II. It appears that under decentralization, parents, with the new power given to them, received the mandate from the state (which parents say they fought to get the state to pass) to integrate their schools, which had previously been grouped homogeneously. Since homogeneous grouping meant that children were grouped according to ability, and since ability as defined by schools and race membership have often been synonymous, parents fought, by their own account, against such de facto segregation.

Also, parents state that in their search for educational alternatives, they came upon the work of Lillian Weber in an Upper Hattville school. In conversation with her and in observations of her work, they became convinced that her establishment of a Learning Community in School I had its base in the same philosophical assumptions about children's learning and about "the positive connotation of difference" that the parents held. Thus it appears that the Project and its clients matched each other--parents were looking for an educational program that would honor cultural, ethnic, racial, and personal diversity, and the Program expressed and was able to

demonstrate these goals as being at the basis of its strategy for school reorganization. It appears that the Learning Community Program demonstrated an educational program that could serve the needs of a culturally and economically diverse school population, whose needs could not be met by standardized testing and academic tracking. And this entry was facilitated because the Project was able to develop and demonstrate educationally sound and convincing ways in which to support heterogeneity in the school setting. While most of the schools in which the Project works are racially integrated (see Chapter II for ethnic characteristics of the schools in which the Project works), the Project works in at least one school that is predominantly Black (98%). Thus the Project does not make racial heterogeneity a condition for its work in the schools. However, where racial heterogeneity is not present, the other aspects of heterogeneity, i.e., age and ability, are respected through the Learning Community structures of inter-age grouping and free interaction within the responsive classroom and in the Community.

> So we had about eight meetings last year with different teachers and the principal to work out a way of doing multi-age grouping, on <u>developmental lines rather than administrative</u> lines or teacher preferences, and to really encourage teachers to keep and help their "difficult" kids and not to send them to somebody else with the excuse that they cannot deal with them. (Teacher)

Implicit in this concept of heterogeneity is the notion of <u>inclusion</u>. The Project states that it <u>values</u> differences (and it demonstrates this as explained above through classroom reorganization that makes provision for individualized learning and heterogeneous grouping), this indicating that differences should not be regarded in a negative context. The Project argues that in traditional education,

which employs the structures of whole class instruction and homogeneous grouping, differences are seen as creating difficulty for the teacher and the school. Thus children who did not fall within a prescribed norm are seen as different within a negative context. Such lack of toleration of differences might result in suspensions, expulsion, isolation, labeling, or some prescription that would make the child "adjust" to the norms laid down by the school.

> The present drive towards classification, promoted by the atmosphere of accountability, fear for jobs, is also bolstered by the rationale that reiterates a single- dimensional view of human capacity, in which difference is deficit, and difference is judged by external demands to which adjustments must be made within a grade progression and a strictly limited time space. Such a view of human organization separates behavior from understanding, cognition from affect. It is derived in large measure from discussions on I.Q. as related to race modification. (Director in the Notes summer 1974 issue).

It may be noted that this concept of heterogeneity flows from the Project's view of children and from its assumptions and projections on behalf of children. It may even be postulated that the Project demonstrates through these two concepts, i.e., view of the child and heterogeneity, a problem-solving approach to inner-city school conditions of student depersonalization and de facto segregation. This community actively sought out the Program, was instrumental in bringing it into its schools, and has continued to support it for almost ten years, which speaks for its viability as a sound alternative to existing programs. The concepts that are examined in subsequent pages, accessibility, community and voluntarism show further refinements of this problem-solving approach to school-based reorganization of education in an urban setting.

The Concept of Accessibility

> The bedrock of the (Learning Community) Program is accessibility. (Project Director in comments to this writer.)

This notion appears to be basic to the Open Education Project's efforts at school reorganization through the establishment of Learning Communities, the Learning Community Support Committee, and other structures. The intention and results of school reorganization have been observed in teacher interaction in informal and formal contexts, the interaction of children throughout the school day both inside and outside the school environment, and the inclusion of parents in curricular and broader school-related issues. We have already noted the specific activities that are connected with this notion of accessibility. The description of Learning Community teacher meetings, the description of Learning Community classrooms, and excerpts from deliberations of parent groups and of informal ad hoc committees such as the Lunchroom Committee and the Playground Committee, are seen by the writer as examples of the practical application of the philosophical concept of accessibility.

This accessibility may be said to have two aspects--first, accessibility is characterized by <u>structures</u> such as those cited above (and described throughout this study). Second, this accessibility is characterized by a certain <u>tone</u>. The first aspect of structure does not involve any change in the physical structure of the school. That is to say that the Learning Communities are reorganizations of the human resources of the school and do not involve reshaping of the physical character of the schools. This point is made to distinguish the Project from what are commonly referred to as mini-schools or open

space schools, where the emphasis might conceivably be upon the creation of a physical environment that is different from the physical plant of the traditional school rather than upon the forging of new relationships among teachers, parents, administrators and children. Simply stated, the Open Education Project exists in schools which have traditional buildings, and the Project's efforts are not directed towards changing the physical character of these buildings. However, while the basic physical plant is not affected, the walls are covered with displays of children's work, large murals, etc.

This point of the restructuring of the human relationships in the school is closely related to the second point of tone. Some concrete illustrations serve best. Parents concerned about giving due emphasis to Black history and culture in the curriculum, formed themselves into a strolling ministrels' group which entered classrooms and corridors and was joined by children in singing appropriate songs. When this suggestion was being discussed, one of the parents said, "The Learning Communities have sings anyway, so there won't be any planning and scheduling problem." During the three-school mural project, which lasted several weeks in each of the schools, parents, teachers, children and administrators joined together in painting, mosaic-making, and mounting. Teachers join together frequently to take children on field trips, accompanied by parents. Children, principals, custodians, parents, assisters andd teachers worked together in devising changes in the environment of the lunchroom with graffiti walls, food posters, pottery walls, etc. It should be stated that this accessibility is not reserved for special occasions but is attempted as part of the normal school day. Thus it would appear that

the Project's efforts are geared towards development of the school as social structure; accessibility of participants to one another appears to be a basic requirement of this development.

A final point has to be made about this notion of accessibility, a point that may be of particular interest to other external assisters working in the school setting. This is the insistence upon the participants' own definitions of what can and should happen within this climate of accessibility. In other words, the Project's position might be paraphrased as:

> When you 'open' up the school, the people inside it will act in different ways towards one another. You don't have to, and perhaps should not and cannot, determine the relationships of these participants within this changed setting. What they (parents, teachers, administrators, children) do within this new social context is interesting and valuable in refining our direction and projections for continued school improvement. Because we also are concerned with schools, we expect to state our position and make projections for further development. But we are also part of this new relationship within the school.

This position may be subtly different from the one in which "technical assisters" conceive of all change as emanating from them and view negatively any change that is unanticipated or not as a direct result of their actions.

The Concept of Community

Again, this point has already been touched upon throughout the study. The notion of community is most closely related to the notion of accessibility. It is the accessibility of participants to one another, particularly teachers and children, that has resulted in the Learning Communities. The Learning Communities are voluntary groupings of between four and six classrooms on a corridor, all

opening out onto it. Alternately, four classrooms opening out onto the L-shaped space produced when two corridors join together may provide the physical base for the Learning Community. The classes may range from kindergarten through sixth grade, so that a Learning Community has children of all ages represented within it. Further, these classes are often inter-aged, with first and second graders mixed in together, fifth and sixth graders mixed together, an inter-aged third-fourth-fifth grade, and so on. The classes are arranged so that the ages closest to one another also have greater physical proximity to one another -- e.g., a mixed fifth-sixth grade is placed nearer the third-fourth grade than it is to a K-1 class. However, even this point is not absolute. In one school, there is cross-age tutoring activity, and here the monolingual English speaking third-fourth graders are taking advantage of their proximity to a bilingual Spanish-English K-1 grade to help the younger children as well as to learn from them.

The physical proximity of teachers who wish to work together and their resultant accessibility to one another are the first step in building a community among them. The assister helps initially by assisting teachers in reorganizing their classrooms, in helping them locate materials and additional resources, and in making suggestions through observation in these classrooms. As the teacher becomes comfortable in her newly organized classroom and in her altered relationship with the children, the assister draws the teacher into interactions with other teachers who are also on the corridor. Teachers may observe in one another's classrooms, one teacher may ask another if they can plan a joint field trip for the children in their

classes. One teacher may request the help of another in designing a mapping project that she plans to do with her class. As these interactions develop, the assister helps in the scheduling of regular weekly meetings of Learning Community teachers, usually during the common lunch period that the rearrangement of schedules permits them. In the main, however, it appears that the building of the community feeling results more from the daily informal interactions among teachers, children and others rather than from the structured interactions such as the weekly Community meetings.

> There are some days when I come in and I know that I am physically, emotionally and mentally not going to be capable of putting in an adequate day of teaching. And my kids would not get from me what they should be getting. And if B-- were in that room down the hall... Just knowing she's there, just knowing that I could walk out of my room into her room for that support, or knowing I could send my kids to her class for that support, is now essential to me. (Teacher)

That the peer support and the community feeling engendered by the Program's approach is valued by the teachers, who have opted to work within its framework, is illustrated by the following development in one school. This school has a ten year history of experience with the Program. Hit by successive budget cuts which resulted in teacher layoffs, the Learning Communities in this school, as in all others, found themselves in a state of upheaval. The carefully built Communities were depleted and disrupted by teacher transfers and layoffs. However, though their classrooms were not necessarily next to each other, andd even though teacchers had been lost, they continued to meet with others who were interested in discussing issues that they themselves were interested in, and thus they built collegial relationships as a result of association within the Program.

The Concept of Voluntarisim. While the term "voluntarism" describes the nature of the participation of parents, teachers and adminis-rators, it is used by the Open Education Project most specifically in relation to the participation of teachers. The Assisters' Service (see Glossary of Terms, Appendix B) spends the major part of the school day relating to teachers either on a one-to-one basis or in small groups, having conferences with them, observing in their classrooms, helping them with curriculum, and bringing them additional materials for implementation of this curriculum. Thus, it is teachers, individually and as a group, who are the main target of the Project's strategy of voluntarism.

It may be noted that the Project's strategy of voluntary participation appears to have a relationship to its philosophical stance about schools and about how to effect change in them. The Project speaks about the "educability of all persons, including teachers." To assume educability may be to assume that teachers are capable of actively seeking improvements in their relationships to one another and to children, in their skills, and in their daily experience as teachers. Program staff speak of "having respect for the teacher's autonomy." This may translate into an approach which does not impose a set of ideas or concepts on teachers, but which holds back until teachers themselves express readiness in accepting these new ideas. The concept of voluntarism may also have a connection with the Project's view of the learning process. The learning process is seen as interactive and developmental, as uneven in pace, as repetitive, even as retrogressive, and as spread over a period of time. Implicit in this view of learning appears to be the notion of interest

on the part of teachers in developing their own skills, with support and encouragement from others, in a way which makes them feel comfortable about proceeding at their own pace. An illustration of the teacher's voluntary relationship to the Program is found in this quote:

> I worked with a teacher who had a terrible problem with her classroom organization. She reached the point, despite all her goodwill, of blaming the children...She became passive, and when I offered help or the parents were critical, she became very hostile. She finally pulled away entirely, saying, "No, I don't want anybody in this," and closed the door. We thought, "Well that's the end," but in a year she began to change by herself. She simply had to do it in a more private way. And one day she opened the door and invited the (assister) to come in and see, and asked if she could rejoin the (Community). Of course we said, "Great!" She helped us and the other teachers understand in yet another way that children's learning is not sequential, that you don't just put a nickel in and get a nickel out...(An assister, in The Open Education Assister, 1975)

Further, this quote serves to illustrate that voluntarism is sometimes renegotiated at intervals, and that it does not mean a commitment merely at the point of entry into the Program.

Implicit in this last point is the realization that voluntarism means different things to different participants. Teachers are not at a uniform level of consciousness and development; they each have a different point at which they say, "I would like to be a Learning Community teacher." One teacher, recalling how she decided to become involved in the Project told this writer, "I wasn't satisfied with the way I was teaching. I had a vague idea about what I might do, but I needed lots of help." Another said, "In college and also as a student teacher I had worked in quite an open way. I wanted to do the same when I had my own class." In a study of Open Education Teachers (Beyond Surface Curriculum by Bussis, Chittenden, and Amarel, undertaken by the Educational Testing Service) the following observations are made about voluntarism on the part of Teachers:

> ...in summary, the data on background and experience do not suggest that the teachers as a group were especially different from other teachers in similar school settings. If they do constitute an atypical sample, they do so to the extent that they voluntarily become involved in programs advocating change. According to their own testimony, however, the group also reflects considerable variation in the matter of initial voluntarism. Some had a clearer understanding of what they were volunteering for. ("I thought it was a great thing for the school" or "I observed another teacher in the program for a year before joining") whereas others happened upon the opportunity or had chosen to participate because there really was no other option ("It was the only kindergarten opening available").

The above quote points to the considerable variation in the matter of initial voluntarism. This variation appears to continue to a greater or lesser degree for many teachers. One assister observed to this writer that a certain teacher never attended Community meetings. However, she added that this teacher "was very concerned about children and children's learning and often talked with her about her classroom and the children." Again, during a meeting of the Learning Community Support Committee, a group composed of parents, a parent observed that her child's Learning Community teacher "did not welcome parents" though the "traditional" teacher of another child of hers was very "receptive to me and likes to have me in class." Thus, it would appear that the nature and degree of commitment varied with individual teachers at different stages of their association with the Program. These observations should again be related to the Project's philosophical stance on the development of teachers' understandings of the goals of the Project through direct experience over a period of time.

It appears that the OEP staff respond to various degrees of voluntary commitment. There are teachers whose movement in the direction of Open Education is very slight, yet some ongoing contact

is maintained with those teachers. This is again consistent with its stance on time needed for teacher development, as well as the uneveness of this development. Advisors helped those who made very small changes and helped in answer to small requests.

The baseline requirement for participation in the Project appears to be that teachers say "I do" or some variation thereof. However, this "I do" as observed above, may be the result of a number of explicit or subtle factors. Teachers may volunteer because they know clearly that they want to work in Open Education and know that they want support from other teachers, the administrators and assisters. A teacher may volunteer because the large majority of teachers in her/his school are part of the Program. Thus a subtle peer pressure serves to trigger a teacher's "voluntary" participation in the Program. Once in the Program, the influence of other teachers causes the teacher to deepen her initial half-hearted or uncertain entry into the Program. This writer observed such an example during a series of staff meetings of a Learning Community in a school. One teacher had recently entered the program. During the meetings she had played a passive role, saying almost nothing. As the series of meetings progressed, teachers were called upon to take on specific responsibilities. As more teachers volunteered to participate more actively in the staffing procedure, this teacher volunteered, too. The assister, who was serving as observer at this meeting, remarked to me, "She chose the job that required the least work, but it's a start."

It should be noted that the voluntary participation of teachers is within a political context viz union membership. The OEP could

not have survived as it has, for almost a decade, without a single grievance procedure against it by the union, if it did not make teacher voluntarism a precondition of its work with teachers. Simply stated, a teacher might complain to the union that she/he was being coerced into implementing the OEP. Or an advisor's entry into a classroom without the prior consent of the teacher might result in the teacher complaining to the union.

The city's current and continuing fiscal crisis appears to have laid additional pressures on voluntary participation of teachers. The excessing of teachers from one school to another under the seniority provision of the Board of Education (explained elsewhere) resulted in teachers from traditional schools being placed in Learning Community schools. Also, teachers in more traditional programs within a school found themselves placed within a Learning Community. In other cases, the demands of parents may require a teacher to work in a more "flexible" way. A case in point is a teacher who, in order to continue to teach in a school, was required to cooperate with the Learning Community Program. It was the only class available, and the parents favored a Learning Community program for their children. They made their wishes known to the principal, who in turn communicated this to the teacher. This is an extreme example of the pressure put on teachers to "volunteer," but one that has been repeated in lesser degrees, particularly during this prolonged period of teacher layoffs, in the city's public schools.

The Project's insistence on voluntary participation appears to produce some difficulties for potential participants. One teacher, who has taught for more than ten years, said that she had approached one of the assisters in her school, saying that she would like to "have some help from her." The assister replied, "Well, you'll have to make a committment to work in this way for a period of time." The teacher in recounting the exchange said to this writer, "How can I make a commitment when I don't know what I'll be doing." Again, the notion of voluntarism presupposes a stage of self-awareness and a recognition of one's need for assistance on the part of the teacher. Teachers who have not reached this stage may therefore not be in a position to volunteer. This point is illustrated by tthe fact that in one of the schools there is a teacher who makes belittling remarks to the children in his class. This teacher's classroom is a few yards away from one of the most attractive Learning Communities in the entire Program. But, the assister has made no overtures to this teacher and vice versa. However, another consultant group composed of poets and writers, who work in the city's public schools and who are quite similar to the Learning Community in their approach, frequently visits this teacher and his class and undertakes projects with them. A member of this consultant group informed me that this teacher was "very cooperative" and appeared "to enjoy" his presence in the classroom while also observing that this teacher was "very controlling and destructive." It appears, therefore, that the Project's doctrine of voluntarism prevents it from having a direct impact on those teachers who are unable or unwilling to recognize the need for change. However, while the Project insists on voluntary agreement on the part of teachers, it can be appreciative of the efforts of teachers who choose to work outside its framework, but who cooperate with other teachers. The

Project Director, making observations in one of the assisters' meetings about her visit to one of the schools in which the Projecte operates, noted with appreciation that a certain teacher not with the Project, was involved in setting up a resource room and working closely with two other teachers, "thinking very hard all the time about what is best for the children."

The Voluntarism of Parents. From the inception of the Open Corridor Program in a school in Harlem, parents have voluntarily associated themselves with it. In many cases, parents preceded teachers and administrators in their recognition of the Project's goals as consistent with what they wanted for their children.

The similarities and differences between parent and teacher voluntarism are both of degree and of kind. Parent voluntarily agree to have their children taught in this way. It is partly due to parent demand that the Program has grown from the three or four classrooms that it started with eight years ago. As noted earlier, parent demand can influence both administrators and teachers to move in a direction more consistent with parents' needs on behalf of their children. The Program staff's reaction to the voluntarism of a parent is slightly different from its reaction to the voluntarism of a teacher. A volunteering teacher becomes the focus of an extended period of inservice training from assisters. Depending on the teacher's needs, the advisors observe in the teacher's classroom, help with classroom reorganization, invite the new teacher to regular Learning Community meetings, and generally help the teacher develop specific skills and strategies that are associated with an Open Education style of teaching. When parents place their children in Learning Community classrooms that may well be the extent of their voluntarism. Usually, however, the parent is

encouraged by the teacher to visit the classsroom, to join other parents in discussions, help out, to accompany the children on trips, to help in fund raising, and to provide in the classroom materials. The assisters' invite parents to discuss with teachers their goals and concerns and also facilitate their efforts in pursuing specific activities. The difference lies in the fact that the parents do not become the focus of an ongoing period of training as teachers do. Parents depend more on one another for an understanding of the Program than on the assister. Project staff members consistently stress the intrinsic skills of parents to "humanize" the school setting and to contribute to what staff and administrators need to know about children's development. It should be noted however, that, particularly in the earlier stages of the Program, parents participated in workshops dealing with specific curriculum issues such as a Workshop on Cuisenaire Rods and a Workshop on Reading, in much the same way as teachers continue to do. (This also continues for parents, as can be seen in Chapter V, which deals more intensively with parent participation.)

Is Voluntarism an Effective Problem-Solving Strategy? Voluntarism is a basic tenet of the Program, along with others such as heterogeneous grouping, child centered curriculum, etc. It is the first step in the Program-school relationship, preceding such actions as classroom reorganization, the development of personalized curriculum, the garnering of additional resources, and the creation of a community of teachers and children. In emphasizing voluntary participation by all, the Open Education Project appears to assure itself of the advantage of drawing into its ranks only those members of the school community who are interested in its work and have an active desire to be associated with it. These persons, by their interest

and willingness, demonstrate a set of beliefs and assumptions, which, by and large, they share with the program stafff. Thus, the strategy of voluntarism ensures the self-selection of a group of persons who have a high degree of cohesiveness because of their shared understandings and beliefs. The effects of this cohesiveness are quite evident. Teachers work together to develop common curricula, open their classrooms to visits by other teachers and children, and help each other with personal and professional aspects of their work. Some of these teachers emphasize the difference between themselves and more traditional teachcers.

> I could tell by the way she talked that I had very little in common with her. She said to me--Why do you want to let the children in the yard every day. They can go twice a week. It's just a bother to let them go out every day. (Teacher in comments to the writer)

Similarly, parents have exhibited their high cohesiveness through their sustained participation in the Program and by their refusal to accede to the Central Board's position on the budget cuts. Such cohesiveness is not achieved with paid release time or other methods sometimes utilied by programs to encourage participation. Further, voluntarism appears to be one strong method of fostering ownership of the program by the various participants. By saying, "I want to be part of it," they are also saying, "I like it and I want to help it grow." The parents' sustained efforts to protect the program, year after year, from budget cuts and other problems is a case in point. A principal's pledge of support to parents to assist them in their resistance, similarly bears this out.

The emphasis on voluntarism at all levels, places the program in a more intimate relationship with school constituencies. It is not hatched in a Superintendent's office, in a Federal policy making agency, or in the halls

of Congress (e.g., Follow Through, Headstart, and other programs) and delivered as a master plan to teachers who are weary of yearly innovations. Rather, it seeks the active participation of teachers, parents and administrators to determine its quality. Because it requires the support of individual teachers, parents and administrautrs, and is partly shaped by the interaction of these different constituencies, it exists at a more personal level in relationship to them. Because the program has never sought to be mandated at the official levels, it does not have the official clout that some programs might have in times of fiscal stress. However, it appears to have the more grass roots type of support of actively interested persons at all levels, amid they have sustained the program in difficult times. It appears to be no accident that the fight by the city's public schools against the Central Board's mandate to shorten the school day was carried, almost exclusively, by the schools in District R, and that the overwhelming majority of these schools were schools in which the Open Corridor Program is the major program.

It has been noted above that the emphasis on voluntary participation has its drawbacks. This strategy prevents it from reaching those teachers who do not wish to or cannot, incorporate methods that are more consistent with current theories of learning. Thus, those teachers who are most in need of assistance may not be reached. The present lack of jobs reduces teacher mobility, with the result that teachers are staying at the same schools in which they began their teaching careers (See Dale Mann, 1971). Thus the problem of staff development, particularly through inservice training, becomes more acute. In this context, the concept of voluntarism will be increasingly put to the test.

The program's philosophical stance is that people are capable of making active, intelligent choices given sufficient time in an atmosphere of trust and empathy (presumably created by the Open Corridor structure). From the beginning, the Program has taken great pains to keep inviolate the teacher's right to privacy and autonomy. Lillian Weber's earliest work in public schools was mindul of these rights. She stationed herself outside classrooms, in the corridors of schools, respecting the right of the teachers to keep the door closed, but encouraging her to "give me a few children to work with" and inviting her to open the door occasionally to "see and share in what was going on outside." This approach bespeaks a refusal to impose the Project's viewpoint on the teachers. Implicit in this approach is the anticipation that people make intelligent choices based on comparative observation. As Weber states, "The teacher who volunteered to join our group requesting our help, was by that very act exercising her autonomy."Within this context one must examine the record of externally imposed programs. (Ernest Hause speaks of the greater efficacy of home-grown or local programs that have, as a basis for their survival, the active voluntary support of the community.) A measure of the viability of the Open Education Project may be the fact that in the schools studied, teachers, parents and administrators have been voluntarily and continuously associated with it for eight years. What the Project loses in a few teachers who are impervious to its effects, it appears to gain in a reputation for not infringing on the privacy or the freedom of choice of any of its participants. An illustration best bears this out. On a walk around the school with an advisor, this writer observed that in one case the advisor knocked on the techer's door and waited for it to be opened whereas in other cases she walked in. When asked why, she replied, "This is a new teacher. She would like to work with us, but its too early for her to have me barging in."

Is it Necessary to have a Philosophy to Assist in School Change?

In concluding this section on philosophical concepts, I will offer some comments on the Project's philosophy and its relationship to school assistance. First, it would appear that the existence of a clearly articulated philosophy serves the purpose of providing the staff with a framework within which to conduct its activities. Thus, the Project staff takes a strong stand against standardized testing based upon its view of the child. A newly recruited advisor, in an informal discussion with me, outlined her plans for next year, whereby she would work to bring parents from one school to visit and discuss with parents of another. She added that this would be a major effort on her part. One might draw the connection to the general concept of accessibility, explored above. Again, one in-school advisor worked intensively to mobilize parent opinion and action around close examination of the conditions of a Federal grant (that would attract middle class students back into the schools), by raising questions of possible isolation of middle class st;udents away from poorer st;udents. This might be seen as a position flowing from the Project's stance on heterogeneity. Thus the Project's philosophy serves to guide Project staff's actions on a daily and long-term basis.

Secondly, because the Open Education project has a clearly articulated philosophy, it appears to be less succeptible to popular fads in education. The "new" and "different" methods of teaching reading and comprehension, or of parenting, that characterize American educational innovation, is in marked contrast to the Open Education Project's broad and comprehensive strategy for school improvement. For example, the Project has a consistent view of the child. Thus, it does not focus one year upon the cognitive

aspects of children's development and discard that the next year to focus on the affective aspects of children's development. It does not support parent involvement one year and then set that aside because there is a popular interest in de-emphasizing the role of parents in schools.

It is difficult to state categorically that it is imperative to have a set of philosophical concepts in order to assist in school change. However, in the case of the Project, its philosophical view has served to inform its strategy and help it avoid diffuse and ineffective activities. Because it does have a philosophy, its role in school assistance is both at the process and at the content level. It takes a stand on issues, and its stand on issues is known. This is perhaps a little different from some types of schools assistance, where the focus is exclusively on "process", i.e., "We'll help you do what you want to " without sufficient clarity about whether a particular course of action is valid, in terms of a long-term view of schooling, in terms of the school's relationship to the larger community, and in terms of socio-cultural ramifications.

CHAPTER VIII: EVIDENCE OF INTERNALIZATION OF THE OPEN EDUCATION PROJECT IN THE SCHOOLS

ABSTRACT

The Open Education Project has been in continuous operation in the city's schools since 1967. The NIE funding coincided with a severe city-wide fiscal crisis which resulted in teacher layoffs and cutbacks in services. Within this context, the following points were noted:

a) As part of NIE funding, the University Center and the Learning Community schools were visited by teachers and administrators from twelve teacher centers in eight cities for periods ranging from two days to two weeks. Several of these visitors were interested in developing open classrooms and setting up or expanding teacher centers.

b) The University Center staff developed in-service workshops for junior high school teachers whose classes were located in a Learning Community school and for teachers whose schools were establishing "alternative" programs due to the efforts of parents whose children had experienced the Learning Community Program.

c) Two assister staff positions continue to be funded by the school district in which the Open Education Project has concentrated its efforts. One of the district-funded assisters resigned his position with the Assisters' Service to become the Director of the district's teacher center. Other teaching and Project staff who were "excessed" were for the most part absorbed into other Learning Community Programs, or hired under district level funding.

d) While the Learning Community Program has been in continuous operation in the schools under study for almost ten years, and while Project-trained staff have over the years taken up leadership positions throughout the district and in other districts, the effectiveness of the Project appears to depend on the fact that it is external to the school system in which it operates. Thus, complete internalization of the Project within the city school system does not appear to be an aim of the Project.

EVIDENCE OF INTERNALIZATION OF THE OPEN EDUCATION PROJECT IN SCHOOLS

It is difficult to state categorically that there is tangible evidence of incorporation of specific aspects of the Project within the city's educational system. Much less can it be stated that the Project, in total, has achieved widespread acceptance even in the school district within which it works. However, certain developments over the past two years, during this period of the city's fiscal crisis, and indeed throughout the existence of the Project, appear to point to a continuation and consolidation of the Project, its practices, roles, and philosophy within the city's educational system.

Moreover, the University Center was visited by teachers and administrators from different parts of the country, who were interested in setting up teacher centers, or who were interested in expanding the activities of their centers. Visitors from twelve teacher centers in eight cities spent from three days to two weeks observing the Project's schools, talking with teachers, principals and parents, and joining workshops and meetings of the Assisters' Service.

Locally, the University Center expanded its services for junior high teachers and administrators (its emphasis is on working with elementary schools), setting up twice monthly curriculum workshops to discuss Open Education and other facets of alternative education. This response to the needs of the junior high schools was the result of a series of significant developments in the school district in which the University Center works. For example, as a result of cutbacks, Responsive classrooms from a local junior high were located in School B. Soon, the assisters there made contact with the teachers in the cluster of four junior high classrooms

encouraging them to share their curriculum ideas and teaching practices with the elementary school teachers. Meetings took place between sixth grade teachers and the junior high school. Parents of the sixth graders met with these teachers to ask about the Project. This particular junior high has a rather formidable reputation and has not succeeded in becoming a feeder school for School B. Parents usually place their children in private or parochial schools, or in another junior high outside the district.

In addition, the junior high teachers attend the twice monthly workshops offered especially for them at the University Center. Thus it would appear that the Open Education Project is expanding its role and continuing to provide services for children who are among the first graduates of the Learning Community Program and are moving into the junior high school. In another closely related case, the Learning Community parents, particularly veteran white parents, managed with district support to establish an alternative junior high school, and the staff of this new program also attends workshops at the University Center. Previously, the district had no alternative or "open" junior high schools, and children had to go out of the district to avail themselves of such a program. The implications for district revenues are obvious.

The district continues to fund (it has done so continuously since 1971) two assisters every year. This past year one of the district funded Learning Community assisters resigned to take a position as Director of the district's Teacher Center, thus continuing a trend of Project trained personnel taking up leadership positions within the district and elsewhere. Also, with the reduction in NIE funding, one University Center assister was

lost. However, this staff member was hired by the district under its ESAA funding of a "mini-magnet" program. These examples are offered as limited observation of a consistent trend of expanding the Project's influence upon the larger established system.

Summary Comments

It is in the area of the Project-trained personnel that the most impressive influence is noted. Persons who have served as assisters have moved on to positions as Open Education Coordinators (the designation itself is new) in various districts. Others have received or maintained positions as Early Childhood Coordinators, principals, bilingual assisters, assistant principals, teaching directors, etc. Assisters have been funded year after year by district and individual schools. For example, District R funded three to (what would be equivalent to) three and a half assisters throughout the period 1971-1975 for work in District R schools. District D similarly funded one assister position for the period 1972 to 1974 as did District M (a total of five assisters during the period 1972-75). Assisters have also been funded through the Learning Cooperative of the Board of Education (equivalent to one and a half assisters for the period 1972-74). Thus, since the inception of the Program, assisters have been funded at the local level as well as through the Central Board of Education. Money has been also forthcoming from the Chancellor's Fund (i.e., Central Board Budget) for training experienced teachers to serve as assisters to their schools. Chancellor Scribner's Fund during 1973-74 paid for the training of four teachers who were released for Assisters' Service training.

To say that the Open Education Project has gained a degree of acceptance within the city's school system is not to say the Project has

become part and parcel of the city system. By its own definition, the Project has placed itself outside the supervisory structure of the school system and its assisters are deliberately placed outside a supervisory role (see Chapters III and VI for a discussion of the principal in relation to the assister's role). Yet the assisters work within the schools. Some assisters have been paid out of district funds, but their training is not within the purview of the district but with the Project. This has sometimes created tension between district officials and Project staff about the area of responsibility of the Assisters' Service. Again the Project, while based at Central University, with fiscal support from Central University, and with the Project Director as a Professor at Central University, still maintains a posture that does not integrate it fully within Central University. For one thing, it has a funding base that is not entirely dependent upon the university, with money coming this year as in past years, from national, state, private and local school services. It may be remembered that the University Center base at Central University was created after the Project had an established existence in the schools. Thus it has engineered a relationship with the university that is both within and outside its control. This ambiguous and broad based position is, possibly, politically beneficial as it places the Project outside the complete control of any agency or individual other than the Project itself. This position may also contribute to program efficiency since it works largely outside the vast bureaucratic public school structure and is not hindered by its organizational complexity. However, because its position is partly within the bureaucratic structure just by the very nature of its work in schools, it sometimes finds itself in the position of resisting the pressure this

entails. It has fought fpr District funded advisors identification with and inclusion within the program.

The Project's experience with internalization and, in general, its work in the schools occasioned the following remarks from the Dean of Central University's School of Education:

> A revolution has two characteristics--infiltration and subversion. I think both have happened in the case of the (Learning Community) Program. In some circles it might even be described as an urban guerilla movement. (During a speech to Learning Community Principals and again at the fourth anniversary celebration of the University Center.)

We have noted the success with which the Project has attracted funds from a wide variety of sources. We have also noted that parts of the school system have been consistently and actively supportive of the work of the Project and demonstrated this support through allocation of space, time, personnel and monies. It is useful to ask at this point whether the notion of problem-solving capacity entails the notion that urban schools have to demonstrate this capacity by relying totally upon themselves. The value of any social organization, of which the urban school is one, is enhanced by interaction with other organizations and individuals. Enough has been written about the imperviousness of schools to outside influences. The interaction between schools and the Project has been demonstrated and continues to be demonstrated. It is questionable whether the clause, "When NIE funding ceases," is ever legitimate, considering the lack of sustained and long-term federal support of durable and demonstrably successful school-related innovations. A more mutually beneficial position, both for the schools and for NIE, is for the latter to allocate further long-term funding to study other valuable aspects of the Project, e.g., long-term impact of

the Learning Community Program at the classroom level, longitudinal studies of students who have been in a Learning Community Program at the elementary school level through junior high and high school. The ultimate validation of any school-based innovation is the positive influence on students. The topics mentioned above have not yet been the subject of any systematic study.

CHAPTER IX: THE OPEN EDUCATION PROJECT: CONSIDERATIONS FOR IMPLEMENTATION IN OTHER SETTINGS

ABSTRACT

In this concluding chapter, an attempt is made to assess the possibilities and limitations in implementing the Open Education Project, (particularly its school-based effort viz the Learning Community Program) in other school settings. An assessment model, developed by Brickell, is utilized and adapted to the characteristics of the program under study. The Brickell model is useful in that it asks questions about innovations prior to their adoption, rather than during or after, which is usually the case in implementation by schools. A limitation of the Brickell framework is that it views innovations in a rather narrow sense as discrete programs such as a particular reading or sports program. The Open Education Project in contrast both in conception and implementation is perceived by me as a comprehensive approach to school improvement. It is concluded that:

a) The Open Education Project can be implemented in any school setting, given certain pre-conditions. Teachers, parents or administrators, or a combination of these, would need to be dissatisfied with traditional class teaching, with teachers working in isolation from one another, with strict separation of teacher and learner roles, with the lack of parent involvement, and with the view of children as passive recipients of curriculum.

b) Support for teachers from an inservice staff, that is external to the established supervisory structure, is noted to be essential to the maintenance of the program.

c) In its practical aspects, the Open Education Project is highly feasible because it does not require expensive equipment, an unusual physical plant, or additional money. Existing physical and human resources may be re-allocated in order to implement the program.

224

THE OPEN EDUCATION PROJECT: CONSIDERATIONS FOR IMPLEMENTATION IN OTHER SETTINGS

In the preceding chapters I have presented factual observations, as well as analytical comments and purely personal opinions, which I consider relevant for understanding the Assisters' Service and University Center for Open Education and their innovative venture in the public schools of New York City, namely, the Learning Community Program. Implicit in these observations, comments and opinions has been a concern with such features of the Program as have implications for its adaptability to other settings in the schools of this country. For example, in making the analysis that parents are a vehicle for institutionalization of the Learning Community Program within the schools, it will be interesting to explore how in other school settings, parent interest and ability can be built upon in order to create a base of support for the program. Again, in examining voluntarism as a philosophical premise of the Project, it will be important to study ways in which teachers in another school, whether in Kansas or Colorado, can be engaged so that they will come forward and make a commitment in time and energy to build a new relationship with children and with one another. The examination of these questions is not the intent of this chapter, however. Such examination preferably should not be conducted in abstract, without a particular school setting in mind. I want to avoid the pre-packaging of "easy steps" or "improved methods".

The purpose of this chapter is to clarify the workings of the Open Education project for school personnel who are entirely unfamiliar with it but may be interested in considering it as an alternative for possible adoption. In order to do this I will utilize a framework developed by

Brickell* to help schools assess the viability of a particular innovation that they might be interested in implementing in their own settings. I think this framework is particularly useful because it assesses an innovation prior to its adoption. The usual experience of schools is to adopt a different innovation almost every year, because they are currently fashionable, to adopt them without careful prior examination, and then to become disenchanted because the program "didn't work". A limitation of the Brickell concept is that it views innovation in a rather narrow sense, i.e., a particular reading, math or sports program, but it is possible to adapt it for assessment of applicability of the Learning Community Program to other settings.

General Characteristics of the Innovation

Magnitude

A Learning Community Program can begin by involving any number of persons. Four teachers working together at planning curriculum, helping each other reorganize their classrooms, encouraging joint use by their children of the corridor and being assisted in these aspects by an assister can be stated to constitute a Learning Community Program. In one school, a small group of parents got together to set up activities in the corridor for one hour every day for children in K-2. They worked with teachers to arrange schedules and to plan activities, and were helped by a teacher and by an assister. Thus, a small beginning can be made by cooperative working among parents or teachers or a combination of both.

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*See "Appraising the Effects of Innovation in Local Schools," Chapter XII in Educational Evaluation: New Roles, New Means, ed. Ralph Tyler, published by the National Society for the Study of Education, 1969.

Complexity

The Learning Community Program does not depend on "an intricate series of interlocked procedures, all of which must be used skillfully on a set time schedule." It can begin with materials that are found in all schools, and it involves personnel already in the schools. For example, a teacher can approach a principal and ask if she can have her classroom next to another teacher with whom she has a good working relationship. Three teachers can ask the principal if they can order manipulative materials instead of basal readers next year. A parent who enjoys cooking can ask a teacher if she can come into class twice a week to try out ethnic recipes with a small group of children. This might result in groups of children from three classes cooking with the parent, and their respective teachers getting together to plan further activities. The Learning Community Program can develop from such simple origins.

Convenience

"Simplicity is one thing; convenience is another." The Learning Community, however, does not depend for its operation on a single and/or expensive piece of equipment. Many Learning Community classrooms are furnished with found objects, e.g., discarded furniture, milk crates, etc. While the Program uses more curriculum materials than traditional classrooms, the fact that the community arrangement of the Program encourages sharing of materials, personnel and other resources, makes this even economical. Thus, woodworking equipment may be placed in the corridor for the use of five classrooms that comprise the Learning Community. A Learning Community may buy one set of encyclopedias rather than a set for each class. The accessibility to persons and materials, which the Learning Community Program fosters, is also an important factor.

Flexibility

This is perhaps one of the most important characteristics of the Learning Community Program. A teacher does not have to follow a rigid series of procedures to implement the Program. Each Learning Community classroom is different from another, with each room arranged to suit the needs of the particular teacher and her class. The classroom may be rearranged as the year progresses. There are no special rules governing the use of the corridor space except that it be used as a natural overflow of classroom activity, e.g., a parent teaching a group of children to crochet, children using videotape equipment or painting a large mural of their neighborhood. In different years, some teachers have found a corridor too narrow for use and have instead used a resource room down the hall where the children from different classes could meet together and work together. This is considered a legitimate attempt to create a community of teachers and children which is the basic objective of the Learning Community Program.

The Learning Community Program is flexible in another sense. Its Learning Communities are not non-negotiable, sealed units. Learning Communities usually consist of between 4-6 classrooms, but there is flexibility in this arrangement as well some being smaller, and others larger. Also, a Learning Community, once formed, does not require an unvarying composition in order to be effective. At the height of the school crisis, when Learning Community teachers had been relocated in large numbers, teachers in different Communities on different floors decided to meet together, and their children made inter-corridor visits, went on joint trips, performed plays for one another, etc.

Distinctiveness

The classrooms in the Learning Community Program differ physically from traditional classrooms. The open classroom, which is the basic unit of the Community, is distinguished by the decentralization of the classroom into a variety of learning areas, as opposed to whole class teaching with the focus on the teacher. In a Learning Community Program, teachers and children are in communication in a variety of ways: several children from different classes may collaborate on a project, teachers may work together to plan currriculum, the teacher of two classes may go with their children on a field trip, etc. The Community classroom is characterized by the mobility of the teachers and the children, as opposed to the fixed position of desks, children and teacher in the traditional classroom. Its structural characteristics make it distinctive from other instructional programs.

Interaction with Other Programs

The Learning Community Program, in practice, has made the traditional programs in a school less formal, in those schools in which it exists side by side with these more traditional programs, but is the predominant program. Significantly, the Learning Community Program has had the effect of bringing in other programs such as arts and crafts and integrative curriculum on its coattails. It has also had the effect of keeping out standardized, prescriptive programs, which require very little input on the part of teacher and child, or programs that do not view the child positively, such as Distar. It has this effect in schools in which it has had time to develop and has a wide base of support and acceptance.

Readiness

The Learning Community Program concept can be introduced into any school setting. While this particular program is at the elementary level, there are other Open Education Programs in different parts of the country that have been successful at the high school level. It does not require elaborate preparation. It is suggested that the idea be introduced to a mixed group of teachers, parents and administrators because the most successful programs are those where collaborative interaction takes place. Specific curriculum content should be addressed, as well as the philosophical rationale of the program. The program should then address itself to only those who have expressed a willingness to work in this way and have voluntarily agreed to make a commitment of time and effort to develop a Learning Community Program. It should not be forced upon teachers by a principal. Each teacher must make a voluntary commitment to be part of the program. Parents who do not want their children in a Learning Community Program should be helped to locate their children in another program.

Trial Possibility

Because the Learning Community Program does not have any elaborate procedures, it is quite possible to try it within a school setting without causing a disruption of the rest of the school. However, the trial attempt should be undertaken seriously: there should be a commitment to give teachers and parents a reasonable amount of time to develop the program and to assess its effectiveness. Interested and willing parents, teachers and administrators should not consider dropping the program before the end of a year, and certain aspects of the program, e.g., the development of community, will not begin to really happen until there has been three or

four years of systematic effort. Other aspects may be apparent almost immediately, such as greater verbalization among children and fewer discipline problems.

Cost

There are no additional costs in implementing a Learning Community Program. What may be required is a re-allocation of the existing school budget, so that money for instructional materials may be spent on a variety of things including manipulative mathematics, science kits, art materials, reading materials, and field trips. A father or mother who is good at carpentry might assist children in designing and building loft space (this was undertaken in one Learning Community) for use as a reading or audio center. Parents and children periodically raise money through cake sales and quilt raffles for special activities like a trip out of town or for tickets to the ballet. Because the Program emphasizes individualization of learning experiences for children, there are costs for additional personnel. However, well functioning Learning Community Programs are able to draw upon student teachers and parents. Where funds are available, money has been used for paraprofessionals, school aides and other personnel.

Special Characteristics of the Innovation

Content

At the classroom level, the Learning Community Program sets aside the prescribed curriculum and, instead, helps base the curriculum on the interests of the children. Thus a child's interest in baseball may be utilized to develop computation and area concepts in mathematics, to increase reading of books about great baseball stars or memorable games and of daily sports

clippings from the local newspaper. A child may learn to locate the teams on a map of the United States, and locate where games are played. A year's integrated curriculum may develop around the community surrounding the school through the interviewing of elderly residents and community workers, the study of traffic patterns (these may be transferred to graphs as part of mathematics), and the writing of a group book with stories and illustrations describing the community. The setting aside of the prescribed curriculum, created by Boards of Education or other officials who are external to the interests of particular children, teachers and parents, is an important aspect of the Program. By setting aside the prescribed curriculum, (using it only where deemed appropriate) the Program acknowledges that the child is not the mere recipient of curriculum but is a creator of curriculum.

Staff Roles

The setting aside of the prescribed curriculum and the reorganization of the classroom change the teacher's role. The teacher now has the responsibility to be a close observer of children, their individual learning styles, their interests, their strengths and their needs. Because the teacher is no longer engaged in whole class teaching, the teacher's physical position is not at the head of the class, but moving among the children as they work, negotiating a dispute between two children, telling a child to complete his mathematics assignment for the day, critically appraising a scale model of the neighborhood that a group of children are engaged in building, etc. By the very act of reorganizing the room, the teacher is in a position of decision-making, as the Project Director points out. By volunteering to work with other teachers to learn better methods of relating to the needs of individual children and also to build group feeling among children, their

teacher is again a decision maker. Thus, the role of the teacher is changed from passive conveyor of pre-packaged or predesigned curriculum to creator of curriculum. The teacher also develops a new relationship with other teachers, because they have made a common commitment to work together and help one another's development. Teachers direct workshops for members of their Community, assuming the role of teachers and learners among their peers. Thus, teachers are in an apprenticeship relation with one another and with the assister (who is a master teacher), with less experienced teachers learning from teachers with greater expertise. This apprentice relationship appears to be related to the communication of specific skills and processes, in other words, to the craft of teaching. In those Learning Community Programs that have the services of an on site assister, the teacher who is interested in developing as an Open Education teacher, is expected to agree to receive assistance from the assister. The assister is not part of the supervisory structure of the school (see Chapter III & VI) and is seen by these teachers as supporting their development in a non-evaluative way. The teacher's relationship to the parent is also altered in that parents are seen as essential to the comprehensive learning development of the child. Thus, teachers are encouraged to relate informally to parents -- invite them to help children at work in the classroom, or to accompany a class on a field trip, request a parent's expertise at art, cooking, building, or some other skill. The teacher's role in relationship to administrators is changed as well. Because the teacher is a decision-maker in her classroom and has a working community of peers, she has the capability, partly because of group solidarity, of asking administrators to offer specific supports for the development of the program. For example, a group of teachers can ask a

principal to pool their money to buy games and manipulative materials rather than basal readers for their Learning Community. Five teachers can go in a group to the principal and say they wish to form a Learning Community and ask him to coordinate their lunch period so that they can meet during that time.

Staff Performance

Any teacher who is interested can be part of a developing-Learning Community Program. There are, in one sense, no minimum requirements for the Program; however, an interest in becoming a Learning Community teacher requires, in the implementation stage, a commitment in time and effort. Individual curriculum development and joint planning for Community activities undoubtedly require a greater commitment on the part of a teacher than is required of a traditional teacher who is teaching an already developed curriculum. Teachers give extra hours to planning and take courses in development, record keeping, materials in mathematics, science and reading to increase their knowledge of children and subject matters. In a prep period, a teacher may have a conference with the on-site assister, or may take the time to observe in another teacher's classroom to learn more effective techniques for integrating science and social studies, or may observe a child so that they can have a discussion about the child's needs. Teachers have been observed to meet occasionally after school to conduct staffing workshops. (See Chapter IV.) The physical rearrangement of the classroom requires both time and energy to set up and maintain. Learning Community teachers in one school come back a full week before the new school year begins, to set up their classrooms. This additional expenditure of

time and effort could not happen without the initial voluntary commmitment stressed above. However, the collaborative relationship among teachers and the assistance of the assister, who is a trained master teacher capable of working side by side with teachers and capable of modeling more effective strategies for teachers, both alleviate the stress on the individual teacher. Parents also locate materials and help teachers by painting furniture, accompanying classes on trips, teaching reading, crafts, cooking, and other skills. (See Chapter V.)

Staff Background

This point has been touched on above. A teacher who wishes to work within a Learning Community Program does not have to have any special qualifications. A beginning teacher in her first year of teaching is as welcome as a teacher with many years of experience in developing informal approaches to teaching and learning. However, in making a voluntary commitment to develop as an Open Education teacher, all teachers undertake to develop skills and insights, through observations, courses, informal meetings with other teachers, discussions with assisters, and other activities. Teachers with certain special qualifications are welcomed, e.g., several bilingual teachers are members of Learning Communities; a principal in one of the Learning Community schools was formerly a math coordinator with special interest in Environmetal Math (as Open Education Math is sometimes called) for the district before he was selected by parents to head their school. However, it needs to be restated, as has been done throughout this study, that the primary requisite for a staff person who wishes to develop within a Learning Community Program is a basic interest in and respect for children's individuality and ability. This is sometimes

characterized as a "good feeling" toward children, which is revealed in the teacher's interaction with children and references to children.

Social Setting

In well-developed Learning Community Programs, teachers in a Learning Community work collaboratively with each other and with parents, paraprofessionals, student teachers, and other assistants. Learning Communities have a considerable degree of autonomy in that the emphasis is on group decision-making in the matter of materials or curriculum. We have noted in Chapter IV that the experienced teacher's preeminence within her Learning Community is based on professional excellence rather than on title or seniority. The emphasis in the Learning Community curriculum is on learning within the context of social relationships with persons of different ages and abilities, cultures and interests, both adults and children.

Space

A Learning Community is created through the cooperative interaction of a group of teachers (usually between four and six) and their children in classrooms that are in close proximity along a hallway. This space varies, depending on the architectural structure of particular buildings. Four classrooms sharing a common hallway space could constitute a Learning Community in the physical sense. So could five classrooms in an L-shaped corridor area. Note that the changed relationship to space exists not only in terms of the corridor but also in terms of the classroom, since the latter is physically rearranged to meet the individual needs of children. The corridor is an extension of the classroom. While space and proximity are

prime considerations, what is more basic are the relationships among teachers and children that create more open conditions for cognitive and effective learning.

Finally, it may be stressed that the Learning Community Program is a comprehensive approach to school change. Thus, while the Program does not require elaborate equipment and expensive structures, it does depend on a long-term commitment to the ideas that: the best style of instruction is one in which children learn by doing; children benefit intellectually and effectively from curricular interaction with peers, older children, parents and other adults within the school setting; curriculum should combine the individual child's interests, the interests of the group, and the inherited cultural tradition. It would appear that teachers, parents and administrators would have to have a dissatisfaction with their present styles of relating to children, with the present structure of teacher-to-teacher relationships and teacher-supervisor relationships, before they would consider adopting this innovation.

The Learning Community Program has always had the support of the external Assisters' Service based at the resource facility, the University Center. While the Project talks about the eventual withdrawal of the external on-site assister (it sees continuance of the University Center, however, as a long-term resource facility for teachers, parents and administrators) in nine years of operation in the city's schools, the external on-site assister has been seen as essential to the Project's maintenance in the schools. Thus, it might be concluded that any implementation of this Program might need to consider the appointment of personnel in an advisory capacity, external to the supervisory structure of the school.

Schools in the Program have given up assistant principal positions to put up monies for assisters. The local school district has continuously funded two assister positions out of tax levy monies. These strategies could be suggested to interested schools.

Implicit in, and vital to, the Project's successful continuation is the assumption that the Program in the school is developmental, that it is spread over a considerable period of time, that this growth is uneven, sometimes retrogressive, and that it requires the active collaboration of all constituents of the school. Administrators, teachers and parents, who do not have their minds set on school change, on the reallocation of decision making power in matters that daily affect children are not advised to undertake such an innovation.

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241

APPENDICES

Appendix A: Methodology

Appendix B: Glossary of Terms

Appendix C: NIE Program Announcement 1974

Appendix D: Project Documents

Appendix E: Excerpts from the Author's Field Notes

Certain documents in the appendices have been retyped for reproduction and to maintain confidentiality.

APPENDIX A: METHODOLOGY

HOW THE STUDY WAS DONE

This study is the culmination of observations and impressions, spread over two years, made while I was a documenter of the Central University Assisters' Service and the University Center for Open Education, and of their school improvement effort, the Learning Community Program, in the public elementary schools in a district in New York City. My observations began in late June 1975, shortly after I was hired as the result of a dual selection process undertaken by the Director of the Open Education Project and by my employer, the Center for New Schools.

The documentation was undertaken, for the most part, in three physical settings: 1) the University Center for Open Education, headquarters for the Project at Central University in Bricktown; 2) School A, the Katherine Mansfield elementary school; 3) School B, the Abe Branch elementary school. Both schools are located in the Upper West Side of Hattsville, where all the Project's nine schools are situated. Visits were made at two other schools on a more infrequent basis: School D, which is in the neighborhood of School B, and School C, which is located in Bricktown. Field visits averaged three a week for the major part of the study, though in the first three months, five days a week were spent in the field. At least one weekly half day or whole day visit was made to the University Center for the Friday Assisters' Development sessions. In addition, visits were made there for attendance at the bimonthly Experienced Teacher meetings, the monthly Assisters' meetings (which were also attended by parents), the Saturday Parent-Child Workshops, and the monthly Paraprofessional Workshops. My remaining two days were spent, often in blocks of time ranging from two to three weeks, at each of the two schools which were the major foci of this

study. These two schools were selected because they each had an NIE-funded assister. In addition, School D was visited because it was one of the additional schools in which an NIE-funded assister worked. It was visited for specific events, e.g., to observe various stages of the production of a mural, which was sponsored and directed by the Project and which involved parents, teachers and children; to observe the Project Director on a scheduled visit to the school; to attend an inter-school parents' meeting on evaluation; to observe striking parents protesting the shortened school day, etc. Six all-day visits to School C were undertaken because this school is the only all Black school in which the Project works, all the others being mixed racially and ethnically in significant proportions.* The field work time of between three and four days a week was flexibly divided among the major settings mentioned above, and was scheduled in accordance with the calendar of events circulated by the Center (see Appendix D). Scheduling was also arranged through conversations with assisters and teachers at their respective schools, through phone conversations with parent facilitators and other parents, through interviews with principals, etc.

In addition to those mentioned above, observations were made in a variety of other settings. Meetings were attended at a local legislator's office and a neighborhood church, where parents were meeting to demonstrate against budget cuts and to plan strategy. I also observed an assister at work as she took a fourth-fifth grade class on a walking tour of the community. Some of these observations were made outside school hours. Meetings of the experienced teachers were regularly held after 3:00 p.m.

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*See summary of Ethnic Data in Chapter II.

Several of the parents' meetings during the school crisis began after 7:00 p.m. and went on for two or three hours. In addition to the events that took place in the city, documentations were made of all Project events outside the city, except one (a DTA conference coincided with the Washington meeting attended by the Project Director, a principal and a parent on standardized testing). These meetings included weekend retreats of Project staff and school district and community associates at a convent in Connecticut, settings of the North Dakota Study Group on Evaluation at Boston and Chicago, and a conference on Teacher Centers in Washington, D.C.

Within three weeks of resuming observations (observations began in the summer when schools were closed) in the fall in the first year of documentation, the writer entered the schools and began observations there. However, from the beginning, the writer was urged by Project staff to "Go look at the schools, that is where the work is." But the decision was made not to enter the schools immediately, because of the initial confusion (this is not to say that stability was regained afterwards) over teacher assignments, classroom assignments, assister deployment, and the daily changes in school schedules, which resulted from the layoffs of school personnel at all levels, as a result of the city-wide budget cuts.

It should be mentioned that neither School A nor School B are schools that are new to the writer. For that matter, neither is the community. The writer has lived in different parts of the Upper West Side for seven years. My graduate work was completed in two institutions located in this community. At one of these institutions, the work being done at School A was assessed as part of a seminar session in which I was a regular participant. A curriculum guide prepared by the writer and published by Haven University's

College of Education based some of its observations on the pre-school program at School J, which is another school in which the Project works. The writer also received training in research techniques for studying classroom interaction, and this training was conducted in classrooms at School A. Several children, who go to this school, live in my apartment building, which overlooks the school playground. I encounter parents, children, principals, and district level administrators in the supermarkets, banks, and buses of my neighborhood. Thus the schools and the community are quite familiar to me.

Data Gathering Mode

The data gathering mode, used by the writer for the major part of this study is non-participant observation. Thus, at the University Center, meetings of the assisters and the experienced teachers were observed, but not participated in; at the schools themselves, the documenter again served as a non-participant observer at meetings of Learning Community teachers, of the Black Parents' Union, of the Learning Community Support Committee, of the School Board of Directors, and of other groups. All of the events mentioned above are usually scheduled, have a planned agenda, and are conducted as meetings. However, a more interactive mode has been used by the writer in more informal or "active" sessions, e.g., workshops, classroom observations, and unscheduled conversations with parents, teachers, assisters and children. Thus, in gathering data on what a Learning Community means to its participants, the writer observed as well as interacted with teachers and children, by raising questions and entering into discussions about specific activities, as they took place in the classrooms or corridor. (It should be noted that interactive observation is an

acknowledged form of data gathering in Open Education research and is widely utilized by the Project itself, especially in its efforts at assister, teacher, and principal development.)

The interactive mode is appropriate in other instances as well. For example, the style of the assister's work in the schools is informal; by this is meant that assisters "drop in" on teachers to make appointments to observe in their classrooms, to come in to work with a group of children, or to lead a whole class meeting about some project that they are planning. One of the assisters spends a lot of time in brief one-to-one conferences with teachers who are on a prep period or at lunch. At such sessions, the documenter is a non-participant. However, at the end of such sessions, questions are often asked by the writer. My own interactive mode, by which I ask questions but do not participate has worked extremely well with one of the assisters and has grown into an exchange on many issues on Open Education, which have stimulated and increased this writer's understanding. At the University Center, the writer's style was more interactive in those sessions which involved participants in "experimental" workshops, for my purpose was to gain insights on participants' reactions to the activities provided.

Another feature of the Project's work that has influenced my mode of data gathering has been the "social setting" of many important events. This again has invited a more interactive role. At many of these events, food is provided and care is taken to create a relaxed, comfortable setting. At such sessions, the on-the-sidelines non-participant method is clearly inappropriate. Participation in the mood and the work of the Project at such times makes recording and documenting less conspicuous and helps to lay the

groundwork for greater access to persons and information. For example, the writer may help in obtaining and arranging food, move furniture, fetch coffee, bring flowers, etc. It will be clear from the preceding statements and illustrations that I have understood my appropriate role to mean the adoption of a data gathering stance which was consistent with the tone and setting of particular activities, so that my actions would not encroach upon or influence the Project's direction in any way.

Access to Participants, Project Staff, Settings, Document Sources

Generally, the writer was not hindered, but actually helped, in her efforts to observe meetings, read documents, and interview teachers, parents, Project staff, administrators and children. Assisters reminded the writer of scheduled events at the University Center and the schools. Much growth on my own part has resulted from my exposure to the Project Director, to one assister in particular, and to their style of intellectual and emotional inquiry in relation to ideas about school improvement. Much information was collected from parents as they went about their activities, in between meetings, during chance encounters in the parents' room, while working with children, or when we met in the subway, the coffee shop, etc. Roughly thirty teachers, parents, principals, children, paraprofessionals, and assisters (both past and present) were interviewed directly by the writer at her request. Most of this material exists on tape. The writer was also given access to taped presentations of experienced teachers at their meetings at the University Center. In addition, informal discussions with district level officials, parents from other Learning Community schools, parents with children in traditional programs in those schools where the Project operates, former assisters who have now taken supervisory

or teaching positions in other school districts, custodians, consultants working in the schools in the district, and members of community agencies have all added to the data base of the present study.

In the matter of written sources of information, the writer was assisted by the fact that the Project has undertaken, over the past few years, extensive and intensive documentation of its own efforts in the schools. In addition, research groups, notably the Early Childhood Research Group and the Educational Testing Service, have conducted published reports of staff development, the assister's function,* and other Project efforts. The challenge has been to balance the perspectives gathered from these sources with the analysis I made, based on my intensive long-term observations, which are documented in this study. All in all, the data base is considered to be comprehensive in the context of the present study.

Some limitations upon the collection of data should be noted here. For example, the writer was unable to converse in Spanish with parents who were exclusively Spanish speaking (most active Hispanic parents in the schools were bilingual). In each of the major schools, at least three or four parents were encountered with whom it was not possible to converse beyond mere greetings. However, at meetings of the Club de Padres, the Hispanic parents' group at one of the schools, the bilingual parent facilitator and another bilingual parent acted as on-the-spot interpreters, at my request. In one instance, an interview with an active parent, who was originally from Ecuador, was conducted by a visitor to the school for me.

Another limitation upon data collection was the situation created by the fiscal cuts in the schools. Cuts in staff resulted in less time for

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*Beyond Surface Curriculum, by Bussis, Chitteden, and Amarel, 1976.

teachers to engage in discussions with the writer. Parents were also very busy when they mounted a resistance to the mandated early closing of schools. Principals were not available since they cooperated with the parents in their protests against staff and instructional time cuts. Assisters covered additional schools because of staff cuts within the Project and also because new teachers were placed in established Learning Communities. Extra efforts had to be made to retain contact with Learning Community teachers who had been transferred out of their schools and, in some instances, out of the district where no Learning Community Program was in effect. In these circumstances, the writer relied heavily on direct observation, scheduled interviews well in advance, or undertook interviews whenever the opportunity arose for conversation and discussion.

Finally, it is possible that certain alternative strategies of data collection might have been used to obtain information which reflected different perspectives. For example, the writer sought information from participants who were, for the most part, encountered in the school setting. However, it might have been possible to interview people who never, or only rarely, come into the schools, e.g., parents who work two jobs, parents who do not feel that they are welcome in the school, community activists who are involved with housing or family problems, and case workers who encounter children and parents in settings away from school. Also it would have been possible to interview parents and children in their homes, in order to ascertain their views about school and about the Learning Community Program in particular. While this information might not have pertained directly to the major focus of this study (i.e., the organizational strategies instituted in the school through the efforts of the Project), we might have

APPENDIX B: GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Open Education -- refers to that strand of education theory and practice exemplified in the writings of John Dewey, Susan Isaacs, and Lillian Weber, and in the school practices demonstrated through the Dewey School, the Activity Method, the British Infant schools, and the Learning Community Programs, among others. This strand of education theory and practice is usually characterized as belonging to the Progressive* or humanistic trend in education. In this study, the term "Open Education" is used to denote the project as a whole, i.e., it is used to collectively describe the Learning Community Program, the Assisters' Service, the University Center, and the range of activities therein. When I speak specifically of any one of these aspects, I use the specific term, e.g., The University Center.

Learning Community -- refers to the concrete manifestation of Open Education as expounded and practiced by the Assisters' Service and University Center for Open Education. The traditional school is reorganized into communal groupings of between four and six classrooms, known as Learning Communities. Within these Communities, teachers meet to plan curriculum, discuss and refine notions of children's development, etc. The physical space outside the classroom is seen as an additional learning environment for large and small group activity or individual activity by children, whether in conjunction with teachers or parents, or just among themselves. Several grade levels are represented within a Learning Community, thus producing a heterogeneous age-grouping of children. In the two schools studied intensively, individual classrooms also contain mixed age groupings, and

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*See Cremin, L. The Transformation of the School and The Genius of American Education.

the populations of both schools are multi-ethnic, multi-racial and multi-economic. Thus, through the development of the Learning Communities, the physical plant of the school is not altered, but instead there is a reorganization of the human resources of the school into interrelated mini-communities. Any change in the physical environment are effected through the display of children's work and through community murals, jointly prepared by children, teachers, and parents. The Learning Community Program is, in all instances, composed of those classrooms whose teachers have volunteered to be part of the Program. There is no school that is exclusively a Learning Community school.

Assister -- refers to a staff member who assists schools either directly by working within the schools themselves, or indirectly by being available to teachers, administrators, parents, community workers, etc. who come to the University Center (which is the Project's headquarters within Central University, and which also serves as its resource facility, containing materials, literature, and workspace for persons engaged in school change). The Assister is a member of the Assisters' Service which is the collective name for this group of persons.

More Traditional -- is a term used by one of the schools studied, to describe its traditional classrooms, and to distinguish them from its Learning Community classrooms (all bilingual classrooms in this school are part of the Learning Community organization). The Open Education Project staff, however, uses the term "traditional" to describe classrooms that are not "open" classrooms. The term "open" is used by the Project to denote its own structure and activities.

Veteran Parents -- refers to that group of parents, essentially white middle-class, who were active in school change before the introduction of the Learning Community Program in their schools.

Funded Strategy* -- used to denote the spectrum of roles, ideas and activities of the Open Education Project, which were funded by the National Institute of Education and observed by this writer.

Technical Assistance Group* -- refers to the Open Education Project and refers more specifically to the personnel of the Open Education Project, than to the ideas and activities of this Project. This group of personnel is external to the organization of the school system, but works within individual schools.

Problem Solving* -- refers to those ideas, roles and activities of the Open Education Project, which in the opinion of this writer, contribute to school improvement. (The term "capacity for problem solving" is one utilized both by NIE and by the DTA project.)

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*These terms have been developed either by NIE or the DTA project to describe certain features, which are exemplified by the Open Education Project.

APPENDIX C: NIE PROGRAM ANNOUNCEMENT
1974

GRANTS TO DEVELOP ORGANIZATIONAL STRATEGIES FOR
SUSTAINED IMPROVEMENT OF URBAN SCHOOLS

Program Overview

This Announcement invites proposals for the further development and/or extension of organizational arrangements that will help people (professional and non-professional) associated with a school or small cluster of schools located in an urban area engage in an ongoing process of:

- Identifying problems.
- Searching for or devising appropriate solutions to those problems.
- Implementing those solutions in effective ways.
- Monitoring performance and assessing the effectiveness of particular solutions, possibly leading to a re-definition of the problems.

The major interest is in programs which show promise of encouraging a continuous process of improvement within a school or cluster of schools. The National Institute of Education is interested in learning whether and how such arrangements can be established and maintained in ways that are not dependent on non-replicable factors (such as building a staff of unusually talented people who will probably leave the project when the Federal funding terminated). The organizational strategy presented in the proposal must show potential for sustaining a process of self-improvement in urban schools; persons preparing proposals should take into account those factors which have hindered previous change efforts in schools. Among the factors the proposed strategy might address are the following:

- Teachers, administrators, parents, and students generally do not have sufficient opportunities to examine the quality of education in their schools, to identify the school's major problems, and to search for and implement appropriate solutions to those problems.
- Staffs and clientele of the schools have not had sufficient access to the range of existing materials, techniques, and research findings that could serve as additional resources for school improvement.

Etc.

APPENDIX D: PROJECT DOCUMENTS

1. Description of the Assister's function

2. University Center Calendars

DESCRIPTION OF THE ASSISTER'S FUNCTION

Assisters And Their Relationship To The Assisters' Service

1. Assisters, regardless of their source of funding, are officially part of the Central University Assisters' Service, if the Assisters' Service approved their selection. This service is the agency supporting continuity of assister development and is responsible for supervision of their work.

2. The Assister function is a professional one, not defined by a schedule of fixed hours. Assisters are expected to do whatever it is possible for them to do as needed within the definition of assister function.

   Assisters are required to report to and consult on their work with the Director, attend development sessions, and fulfill all aspects of role (as defined in other documents). They work on-site in classrooms with teachers; they offer teacher consultation and workshops. They meet with paraprofessionals, student teachers, parents and administrators.

   All assisters have the same relationship to the Assisters' Service.

3. Assisters always function within the context of open education--of helping teachers develop the classroom organization and relationships favorable to active learning.

   Assisters function within the context of voluntarism -- in response to requests and to the commitments made by teachers who have accepted the framework and direction of the Learning Community Program.

   Thus, the basic location of Assisters is at schools favorable to open education.

4. The Assister does not relate to open education development as fixed or limited to its beginnings. On-site work in classrooms is engaged in only with teachers who want to move towards open education and on invitation of the teacher.

   Assisters are accessible to all teachers. All open education workshops at Learning Community schools are open to the teachers not working with the Learning Community.

   Assisters make themselves available to inquiry from other than open education teachers.

5. In the interest of building school support for open education and school self-capacity to sustain change, all supervisors and administrators from the open education schools and teachers experienced in open education are invited to join Assister development sessions.

6. On a district-wide basis, response to inquiry will be built into the assister's time (described under Assignments).

   On a district-wide basis, monthly workshops open to all of District R will be planned at the University Center.

   District administrators and heads of programs are invited to join Assister development sessions.

   Paraprofessional workshops will be resumed as soon as possible. The Service's full effort beyond just District-funded assisters is given to staffing these workshops.

   Open education assisters help other school personnel and other district resources in response to requests.

7. Integral to our support for teachers is the University Center, offering teachers, as they experience their own learning and enlarge their repertoire and understanding, the physical and psychological setting for understanding the learning process and the conditions and relationships that foster this process. All assisters use the University Center as the major supplementary support for their on-site work with teachers.

ASSIGNMENTS

All assignments of assisters are made in response to need.

The Assisters' Service response to schools in District R has always been greater than what was made possible by Title I funding. This allowed flexibility of assignment in response to need which was maintained even when Title I funding was funneled through individual schools.

We will continue to assign assisters who are district-funded in response to need.

Some schools serviced in the past will need less Assister help because they have fewer open education teachers or have moved further towards school self-capacity for support of their own change. Others will need continued support to assist with necessary adaptations due to the multiple effects of recent shifts in teacher placement.

Assignments to schools will be made definite as soon as conditions seem stable, leaving room for response to inquiry and for workshops.

It is hoped that the assisters can plan for time to answer new inquiries either from open education teachers we already know who are now placed in new schools or from a new group of teachers.

Central University School of Education

January

The University Center is a free facility for teachers and other school people, parents and community members, who are making changes in learning environments for children. Each month it schedules workshops, discussions and film showings led by Center staff, Central University faculty, community persons and experienced open classroom teachers. Four times a year it issues a magazine, NOTES, featuring articles by teachers, staff and other contributors to developments in open education.

The University Center offers curricular activities in art, language, math, music, movement, science and social studies; experiences with natural materials; a shop, darkroom, kiln, kitchen and reference library. (Participants are expected to pay normal fees for some materials.) Above all, the Center is a place in which to browse, to try something new or rethink something not so new, to share ideas and practice in a relaxed and supportive setting.

HOURS OPEN: MONDAY THROUGH THURSDAY: Sessions start at 4 PM and continue until a good finishing point is reached. At the conclusion of each scheduled workshop, UNIVERSITY CENTER staff members are available until 7 PM for conferences, jam sessions, film and slide showings, and help with individual projects.
SATURDAY (see One-Time Workshops): 10 AM - 1 PM

DAYS CLOSED: January 3 and 31

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* This Month's Seminar: *
* *
* LIVING IN EAST HARLEM *
* *
* Wednesday, January 19, at 4 PM *
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MONDAYS

DRAMATIZATION: SHADOW PLAY, PUPPETRY
with Sylvia Lahner and Joy Hennings

CARE AND FEEDING OF ANIMALS IN THE CLASSROOM
with Pansy Wong and Joseph Cheng

Film: ANIMALS IN AMBOSELI PARK, KENYA (Man: A Course of Study)

TUESDAY

(January 4 and 11) SOCIAL STUDIES: FAMILY LIFE
with Gail Samuels

(January 18 and 25) SOCIAL STUDIES: MAPPING
with Joy Hennings

PHOTOGRAPHY WITH/WITHOUT A DARKROOM (limit: 6)
with Joseph Cheng

UNIVERSITY CENTER FOR OPEN EDUCATION — Lillian Weber, Director

Central University School of Education

February

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SATURDAY (see One-Time Workshops): 10 AM - 1 PM

DAYS CLOSED: February 14 and 21

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*
* THIS MONTH'S SEMINAR:
*
* JAMES MEYERSON, Assistant General Counsel, NAACP
* on
* THE COURTS, THE BLACKS, AND THE SCHOOLS
*
* Wednesday, February 16, at 4 P.M.
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MONDAYS

THE ART OF READING ALOUD: Fairy Tales & Myths
Sylvia Lahner and Joy Hennings

MAKING YOUR OWN SLIDES -- (Limit: 10)
Joseph Cheng and Gertie Bee

TUESDAYS (February 1 and 8)

MOVEMENT FOR LOWER GRADES
Joy Hennings

BEGINNING PHOTOGRAPHY WITH/WITHOUT A DARKROOM (Limit: 6)

UNIVERSITY CENTER FOR OPEN EDUCATION

EXPERIENCED TEACHERS, ASSISTERS AND UNIVERSITY CENTER STAFF MEETING SCHEDULE:
Experienced teacher and parent breakfast meetings are discussion meetings.
Starred meetings are specific in reference.

February 1977

**Tuesday (2nd) February 8, 12-2 p.m. Staff session preparing Workshop Calendar

Wednesday, February 9, 4-6p.m. Experienced Teachers: Vulnerability, Coping, and Growth, Chapter 10, (Cheryl Meade, Pat London, Amy Wilson)

*Fridays, February 4, 11, 18, 9:30-1:30 p.m. Working sessions: staff conferences.

Wednesday, February 23, Experienced Teacher Session with E.T.S.: Reading Session

Friday, February 25, Parent Breakfast Meeting

**Thursday, February 24, Workshop For Paraprofessionals.

APPENDIX E: EXCERPTS FROM THE AUTHOR'S FIELD NOTES

NOTES FROM A MEETING OF TEACHERS IN A LEARNING COMMUNITY CONDUCTING A "STAFFING MEETING."

Teachers arrive and are all seated a little after 2:30 p.m. Teachers sit in that part of the classroom which is an open space and is most usually used for meetings during the regular school day, by the children and their teacher. They pull chairs around a rug on which children sit during their meetings. The meeting commences at 2:35.

Teacher MVH, a younger teacher, who will chair this staffing meeting, calls the meeting to order. She says they have only 25 minutes to conduct this meeting because the teachers are scheduled to attend a meeting downtown in connection with the AGE project. She suggests that the meeting start immediately and no time be wasted.

MVH asks teacher AM to "present his child." AM states that he had decided to present Sarah (name changed to ensure privacy) because "I am not sure what I should do next with her, and I want help. I've tried a number of things. And I've talked to some of you about her and I've talked to some of the learning disabilities people here from Downtown College but I would like some help."

MVH says that AM will present data about the child under the categories of "Family Background", "Physical Characteristics", "Competencies", "Social Relationships", and "Teacher Observations of Child."

Teacher AM says he has been "worried" about Sarah because she "cannot remember anything." She forgets the names of things twenty minutes after she has been told what they are. She forgets the names of the letters of the alphabet. He says Sarah is seven years old and is in his K-1 classroom. She started school last year. She is about 3'6" tall. She is healthy, eats well, is very attractive, very cute. People are attracted to her; she has very attractive manners.

In terms of her "gross motor coordination" he says Sarah can "hop, skip and jump. She likes to jump a lot especially in the gym." He notes that "she is slightly pigeon-toed and this makes her movements a "little clumsy and awkward." In terms of her "fine motor coordination" AM observes that Sarah "points with her middle finger." She "sucks her pencil." He added that "she has very poor eye and hand coordination" and illustrates this point by saying that Sarah has difficulty copying things off the board. In fact, she finds it impossible after the first few minutes. He adds that this may also indicate that the child "has a very short attention span."

Refering to her academic performance, AM states that he has tried to read with her. He finds that "she cannot hold any thing." He says she forgets the word she has just read after she has been told what it is. She has special problems with the letters "Q, R" and some others. She reverses letters when she is writing, also numbers, and the sequence of these letters and numbers. He says she is on the Merrill Linguistics text. He says he has tried organic reading with her but he has not had much success with this either.

AM says Sara "will not initiate any reading." He says he tries to give her ten to twenty minutes of individualized reading every day, as he does with a number of kids. He states she says "No, I don't want to do it." He says her "number concepts are good. She can add. But she will forget from one day to the next."

Describing her interests he says "she loves clay, cooking, playacting, cutting and pasting." He says she will do this for as long as half an hour. Describing her social relationships, AM says Sarah has "acted like a catalyst, bringing people together. She has brought the Hispanic children into closer contact with the non-Hispanic children. She does not relate to large groups of children but instead works with one or two children at a time." She will spend a month with one or two children "then she moves on to another child or a pair of children." She does not have any one steady friend as many of the children have. He adds, "She demands a lot of attention from adults."

AM continues that in terms of her family background, Sarah has two older brothers. She is an adopted child, and that she "was adopted when she was 2 or 3." She used to live in Panama before she came to this country. Her family is very supportive. AM says they do not put any pressure on her to read nor do they put pressure on him to teach her.

AM says he had tried a number of ways to get her interested in reading. He has tried to get her into a cross-age tutoring situation, hoping that she would enjoy working with another child, but he says she doesn't want to do it. He says he is being helped by some student teachers from Central University's Special Ed. Program. They have recommended that she receive "a more formal type of instruction." He says they feel that Sarah's time should be "more structured" and that she be told firmly that she "do this at this time." He says these special ed. teachers indicated further, that Sarah "was not visual in her learning mode, that she was aural." Therefore she should have words sounded out to her and receive a lot of aural instruction.

AM says he thinks this is a good suggestion as he has himself experienced that Sarah responds more to aural directions, and also that she has poor word recognition when it is presented visually as in reading a book together.

At this point MVH, who is chairing the staffing meeting asks AM if he feels he had completed presentation of all "important data" about the child. AM says "I think so, at least as much as I know." He laughs. MVH says she will now review the data presented by AM. She does. She asks AM if she has left out anything. She asks the group if she has included all the material that AM provided. Hearing no suggestions, MVH says it is now time for the teachers to ask AM any questions that would provide more information about the child.

Teacher PL asks if Sarah has any close friends. AM replies that "she switches," but that while she has them she is close to them. TAG member AC says it is significant that she gets along very well with other children. Teacher RE says "she is very spoiled." Teacher Assister WC immediately says "How do you say that? What behavior indicates that?"

Teacher RE replies that she has often spoken with Sarah and that she uses "baby expressions and demands a lot of attention. She clings to an adult and tries to please the adult." MVH says that she also met Sarah when she was a cluster teacher in AM's class. She says this is true. "You all have to come down and meet her." Teachers nod.

Teacher-assister WC asks "What is her general tone?" AM says she is "even, but moves around the room a lot. She is not noisy." MVH says "she samples activities like a buffet." WC asks "what kinds of fantasy play" does she get involved in in the housekeeping area?" MVH, "what about clay? What does she do with it?" AM says Sarah pats the clay, she also sometimes puts it in her mouth.

AM says there is one important thing he forgot and which he would like to share with the group. He produces a wooden boat that he says Sarah made. There are exclamations among the teachers. One or two of them reach for it and examine it closely. The boat is of raft design with a mast and a sail. It is about eight inches high and the base is a piece of wood about four inches square. One teacher says "It's beautiful." AM says Sarah was very interested in making the boat. "She initiated" the activity. She did it in stages. She cut the wood. Then another day she came in and asked AM if she could paint it. She glued the mast and the sail. She stayed at the activity until she completed it. --- says she had seen some other children make boats too

Teacher WR reads back recommendations that have been made by the teachers and recorded by her. MVH asks WR to give these to AM so that he can use them in designing his work with Sarah. MVH also adds that the recommendations will serve as a record when teachers review Sarah's progress at a later time which can be decided on or at AM's convenience. MVH calls upon teacher-assister WC to critique the staffing.

WC, in her critique says, "AM, you were absolutely marvelous. Your material was very thoughtful and very carefullly presented. I felt I had a very good picture of the child, though I have not had the opportunity to observe her." She asks teachers if they "got a good picture of Sarah." They nod yes or otherwise assent. She says MVH was "especially helpful when she explained the format and reviewed information as it was presented." She adds, "AM you were superb. We hardly had to ask any questions because your information was so thorough."

AM says he found it very "helpful" to meet with MVH during lunch to review the information he had collected and familiarize himself with the format utilized by MVH. He said "she was very helpful and she showed me how to do it."

Teacher-assister WC adds, "The recommendations are sound. We will check with AM in a month or so." MVH says it was important to note that the recommendations flowed out of the information presented.

(From writer's field notes (FDF))